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WITH THE
RED CROSS
IN SERBIA
1917.

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WITH

# The Red Cross In Serbia, 1917.

Being the Letters of

MALCOLM P. CLOW,

a Conducteur of the

CROIX ROUGE FRANCAISE,

Attached to Seventh Division
French Colonial Army.

JOHN CLELAND & SON, LTD., BELFAST.
1919.

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**MALCOLM P. CLOW.**

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# FOREWORD.

THIS little book is intended as a wreath of immortelles laid lovingly on that far-off unvisited grave in Serbia. Penned with no thought of publication, the letters are given to a wider circle not so much for their literary merit (though in that they are not lacking), as because in every line the writer reveals what spirit he is of, and unconsciously draws a picture of himself which those who loved him will never tire of looking upon.

It was a great adventure on which he set out that February day in 1917, and one exactly suited to his temperament. Never too robust in health, he had unsuccessfully tried to enlist in several branches of the British Army, but helping and healing rather than fighting appealed to him, and he eagerly embraced the opportunity of joining a British Convoy of the French Red Cross, composed of voluntary workers. Gay, happy, debonair—he was a Peter Pan, who refused to grow up. Life to him was ever fresh and interesting, and his descriptive power was a gift that he used for the sheer joy of conveying his experiences to others.

Music was his master-passion; to sing a never-ending delight to himself, as to those who listened. His subtle and perfect interpretation was but a revealing of the inner man, endowed with "soul" beyond the ordinary. It was a beautiful thing that, having been the winner at 'Derry Feis of a Challenge Cup and Gold Medal, he should have left as a bequest another Silver Challenge Cup, to bear his name. Though almost every letter spoke with certainty of a joyful re-union, yet his thorough nature had left no contingency unprepared for, and on the day before his departure he had executed his last will and testament, unknown to any. Even this document revealed the man at his best, and every beneficiary received not money merely, but a benediction. Filial

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devotion was a marked characteristic of his; the last letter he was able to pen was addressed to the "Dearest of all," and two of his bequests were to the Sabbath School and the Sustentation Fund of the church to which his father had given life-long service.

We did not need the letters of his officers and comrades to assure us that his work was well done and his friendship prized. Nothing he did was ever done badly, and though he constantly made friends, he never lost them. His faith in God was deep and well-grounded, and the trials of the eventful journey and his after experiences seemed to bring to blossom what had been in bud before.

A happy warrior, indeed! Could he choose his own epitaph, it might well be the words of Stevenson's "Requiem" which he so often sang:—

"Under the wide and starry sky
Dig a grave and let me lie;
Glad did I live, and gladly die—
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea;
And the hunter home from the hill."

E. M. C.

FEDDAL HOUSE,
PORTADOWN, *July, 1919.*

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**THE CONVOY.**

*Photographed at Bristol before embarkation.*

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GRAND HOTEL,

BRISTOL, 3rd February, 1917.

MY DEAR EMILY,

I have to acknowledge letters from the entire family and to apologise for not writing you earlier, but since last Monday I have lived in a perpetual rush. On that day the whole convoy drove over to Windsor and we had lunch there. When we got back I tucked my skates on and had half an hour before dark, in high hopes of a good time at Wisley hut on a large lake there next day. I was sitting by the fire writing when somebody came in and said the Major had been through on the 'phone to London and we were to start off next day. I didn't believe it, for Smith the hotel-keeper said we were certain to remain another week and I had arranged to go up to London for the week-end. Harry Eastwood said he'd go and make sure, and in a few minutes came rushing back with the word that the report was true. At dinner the Major made the announcement, and after our meal we spent the rest of the evening in rather extensive packing.

By 9-45 next morning we were under way for London all in a string. At 11-30 we were drawn up at Hyde Park and waited there in the biting cold till one o'clock, when we were sent to garage our cars and have lunch, with instructions to be lined up again at 2-30. At that hour the French Ambassador and several French military men, together with a Vicomtesse somebody or other, reviewed us and expressed great praise at our status and general efficiency. The lady spoke to each one of us. After the inspection we brought the cars to Belgravia Mews and loaded them up with goods, etc., we are to bring with us; this finished, we were free for the evening. I paid one or two calls and took Jessie Horne to see "London Pride." It was a well-acted play but the plot was not interesting beyond a certain point. We all slept at the Windsor Hotel and were called at 5-45.

It took us some time to get the cars in order, but by 8 o'clock we were under way for Bristol in a blinding snowstorm, which most fortunately did not last long. It was a cold, bleak journey for half the way. By 10 o'clock we were at Maidenhead, where the Major stood us a second breakfast, so that I had had four eggs before noon! The C.O. kept pushing on, one and another dropping out temporarily during the day. A few, including myself, were able to keep the line for the entire journey without a break. At 4-30 twelve cars out of nineteen drew up at the appointed garage in Bristol. No. 4 section finished complete,



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and the other cars came straggling in during the evening at odd hours. Fourteen of us housed at the Grand Hotel, and weren't we glad to have a wash and go to bed! In all, the journey was about 120 miles.

Next morning we took the cars a further 7 or 8 miles to Avonmouth, cleaned them and drew all water and petrol out; then we all went to the theatre and had a ripping evening. I was soundly sleeping at 6-50 yesterday morning when my door was rudely banged and I was ordered up. By 7-15 I had had breakfast and was on my way to Avonmouth again. The two staff cars towed the others one by one round the quay alongside the ship, and they were hoisted into the hold in double quick time. An hour sufficed for the whole lot, and then we were free. I was glad to see the last of them, and when I brought my car to a standstill and dropped, the C.O. gave me a pat on the back for my non-stop run. He gets irritable at times, but on other occasions is quite charming. He has asked me to sing for him, and I said I was quite at his service in that respect at any time if he would provide a piano and get Mr. James to play for me! When I went skating last week he told me to be careful for he couldn't spare me presently! I expect that remark was drawn out by the fact that I had spent three whole days under the cars helping the two engineers to put extra springs in. It is a long, tedious job, and only four cars were finished before the call came; the balance will have to be done out there. It was purely a voluntary job and Mitchell and I tackled it with the two experts, so-called. The second in command was extremely pleased and told me he had noted our heroic conduct in his diary! All this may be very nice in its way, but the military discipline and want of freedom remain, which at times would be rather irksome were it not for the big satisfaction of doing one's bit in the great cause. I feel sure when we get out there all our petty differences and squabbles will fade away in the thought that we are helping those in pain and suffering.

The boat we go out in is a cargo-boat and we are the only extra people aboard. She is full of ammunition, but all the fuse caps are drawn so an explosion would be local. There is no real accommodation for us and we are to be housed in the f'c'sle beside the crew, sleeping in hammocks swung over the mess tables. In consequence, our baggage is reduced to a minimum, the balance being stored in the cars. The voyage is expected to occupy three weeks and they will be certain to be three long anxious weeks too. The naval officer at the port says they have sent out 1½ ships per day on an average and only one has been



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sunk up to now. I heard a rumour that three ships were going together and that since their cargo was very valuable they would in all probability be convoyed, at least through the danger zones.

The boys are all in good spirits, and the general feeling and presentiment is that we will reach there quite safely. The boat is armed, too. I am not at liberty to give you her name, but she is a Scotch boat carrying 6-7000 tons, and Jessie Horne's so-called Uncle Willie Gardiner owns her. The captain's name is Graham, and he comes from somewhere in Co. Tyrone. It struck me he might be some connection of the Caledon Grahams.

I have saved a photo and am posting it on to you for keeps. I shall also send on Monday or Tuesday a group of the whole convoy. On board ship I shall try (if not too ill) to give you a short sketch of each of the members, I mean some few words to let you have an idea of my mates. We had the photo taken this morning opposite the Royal Hotel, with an admiring crowd looking on. Our uniforms are well known in the cafes and streets now, and it is most amusing to have the Tommies and even sergeants and cadets salute us. The star turn of the convoy is Hampson. He is 5 ft. 3 ins. and quite plain to look at, a South African who can melt pound notes like water. He struts down the street like a lord and the Tommies think he's A.P.M. He gives me more amusement than all the rest put together.

A great many of the boys have gone to the Panto to-night—the Major too. He, I believe, is sporting a box and taking Eastwood, Mitchell and one or two with him. I was not so honoured. The fourteen of us here include the younger fry, the Royal has the section leaders and those who can enjoy their glass. Not one of our crowd here have I seen the worse for drink although the number of TTs. is very small. Deep down the man I respect most is our Padre, Rev. Maitland. We are good friends and on board have promised to stick close and be brothers in seasickness. He does not wear his religion on his sleeve, but I can't imagine a mean or low act from him.

Thanks to Annie, Nellie, Ida, Papa and all of you for your good wishes for my safety on the journey and afterwards. I know, and knew long ago, that I'd be daily in your thoughts and prayers. The thought is a great help to me indeed: were it not for that and the knowledge that I'm doing the right thing towards myself and my fellow-men I would not run the risks at all. I feel, however, that my life's work is not over and that I shall come back to you all again stronger in mind and body and able to look the world in the face.

With fondest love to all.



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GRAND HOTEL,

BRISTOL, 7th February, 1917.

MY DEAR FATHER

It is now 12-15 and our lunch is timed for 12-45. At 1-45 a 'bus comes to take us bag and baggage to Avonmouth. where we go aboard at once. I fully expect we shall get away by to-night's tide and in the morning will be on our way down the channel.

We are all in excellent spirits though somewhat subdued perhaps. Mr. Hannan our quartermaster has squared the steward to give him his room, and he has done me the honour of a asking me to go halves with him subject to the Major's approval. He may and likely will allot it to some of the section-leaders or older men, but still I've got the chance.

I send fondest love to all and will try to keep a good stout heart all these trying weeks. The thought that so many kind hearts at home are with me all the time is help beyond measure. I cannot write more just now but will keep in close touch from the ports of call, whatever they may be. Pray not only for my safe return, but that I may be given strength to do my duty nobly under all circumstances, and that if we fail to reach port and I go under that I may do so helping my fellow-comrades.

Ever your loving son.

---

AVONMOUTH,

7th February, 1917.

MY DEAR FATHER,

We are now at Avonmouth with all our traps aboard. The weather is calm and frosty. I hear we are to join a convoy soon after leaving. This will be a source of great comfort to you and all concerned. I've slipped up to town to post this.

Love to all.



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AVONMOUTH,

9th February, 1917.

MY DEAR EMILY,

I am still here awaiting the Admiralty's order to sail. The report comes to-night that our friend Fritz who was doing the damage outside has been sent to the bottom, so the order may come at any time. Life aboard here since Wednesday evening has not been pleasant in any way. The cold has been intense—2 degrees of frost on Wednesday night. None or very few of the boys slept at all in their hammocks. On that night I was fortunate enough to get a lie down in Mr. Hannan's cabin, but last night I had to sleep in the fo'c'stle with the others. I managed to rig up a little trestle bed but it was very hard and towards morning the cold was intense. We have two tables rigged up which seat seven a side; for meals up to now we have had stew, and stew, and more stew.

We got up to Bristol Thursday and to-day and had a real good feed in the Grand Hotel so that personally I didn't mind a jot. To-night we had mince and potatoes which was a decided improvement. We also get bread and margarine with the famous plum and apple jam, and condensed milk, coffee of a kind, and tea, both of which I have left alone. Mr. Hannan the quarter-master has gone. He was too old and diabetic to stick the work and had to give it up. Some of the men are fine, particularly our Padre, Mr. Maitland, right behind me in the photo on the outside, but I'll tell you all about them on the passage out if possible.

I had a long yarn to the Captain yesterday. He is 53, has been 36 years at sea, and this is his last trip. He is a Belfast-man, and sailed for 18 years on the "Head" boats, a portion of which was spent with Captain Thompson, who he says was the whitest man he ever knew. He brought me up to his cabin and showed me, as one of his treasures, a letter which he got in 1906 from Uncle Malcolm congratulating him on his command of the s.s. "Dunnater." It was a typical letter and in it he says he has written to Brew and Cather telling them the good news. He was surprised to hear that Brew was one of our family. We talked for a very long time over the Head Line and Belfast in general. I had another surprise in the form of a letter from Malcolm Wilson to say Aunt Katie was in Bristol, and I rang up her address but she had gone two or three days before. Capt. Graham was most anxious to see her for he was a great admirer of her it seems. The coincidences were complete when I told him of the Hornes, who he said were to have come home



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from Australia on his boat. He had the cabin painted, etc., and then they were switched on to the "Glencluny." To-day I was having lunch in Bristol when a lady and gentleman came in. Their faces seemed so familiar that I had to speak, and found I had met and gone trips with them at the Bear Hotel, Grindelwald, four years ago. Mrs. Gwyn has invited me for lunch to-morrow if we are still here, but as our section are orderlies to-morrow I doubt if I shall get away even if we don't sail.

Tell Annie to give Jack this information about Captain Graham. Papa might also tell M'Letchie and his henchman Chambers that I ran into young Barnett in Selfridge's before I left London. He has not been accused of spying but was off on sick leave when I saw him. We went round the shop together and I was standing at a counter when someone tapped me on the shoulder and I found Myra Petrie, the pretty little girl who used to be in our telephone office some time back.

I trust all goes well at the Mill. I long for the day I shall be back again, for the journey is not a pleasant prospect. I'm trying to keep up a good stout heart and have some good pals to help me. We will have deck games when we start and plenty of literature to keep us moving.

Send this as usual to Nellie, who is often in my thoughts. Her last letter was a source of help to me, but I think I thanked her direct. I'm going to try to get warmed now, for my feet are as icicles.

Fondest love to all.



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AVONMOUTH,

Sunday, 11th.

MY DEAR ONES,

We expect to sail in an hour or perhaps less.

We are all in good form and looking forward to a safe arrival at our destination. I hope to get this ashore with either the doctor or the pilot.

Fondest love to all.

I know you will be with me all the way and I don't think you need worry about me. I'll get there and home again too, and the joy of the homecoming will swallow up all else.



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ON THE HIGH SEAS,
20th February, 1917.

MY DEAR ONES,

I'm not at all likely to get this posted at Gib. to-morrow when we are expected to reach that port but on the off-chance I'm writing to give you some idea of my trip so far. It has in the main been far from pleasant for many reasons. For most of the way there have been very heavy seas and my old enemy seasickness has been very cruel to me. I succumbed on the third day out and have had a wretched time of it since. My accommodation, too, was far from good and the comforts at hand very few. The doctor did all he could for me but in seasickness that unfortunately isn't much. Out of 30 of us I think only five escaped and they worked in most exemplary fashion to keep our body and souls together. The boat is not a fast one, and the course mapped out not by any means the shortest so we had heaps of time to reflect. These last two or three days have been much warmer and the doctor brought me up on deck where I've lain and read and tried to while away the weary, weary hours as best I could. I think when we get ashore at our destination we shall heave a decided sigh of relief. No matter how brave we are there always is that horrible background—the Subs—and travelling alone as we are it is not easy for one of my temperament to set the fear aside. For so far there has not been any social amusement on board. Likely when we get through the Straits and into calm weather we shall have some. By that time we shall all have found our sea-legs and be fit to run around. Up to now I've preferred my deck chair and a book. I told you before I left of Capt. G.'s acquaintance with Uncle Malcolm and Jack Brew. I've had a few yarns with him since about the deck. He is a kindhearted, straightforward Belfastman, and has done all possible for us on board, but with the accommodation at hand it has not been easy. I could avoid being hungry very well indeed with the food if I hadn't been seasick—I've had much worse often. We get porridge every alternate morning with condensed milk and usually fresh bread: no meat at that meal. For dinner soup, at times joint and vegs., no sweets, and for supper stew or hash or something of that kind. I managed to buy a large bottle of ship's lime juice from the steward, and it has been the most refreshing article on board to me. Our letters are to be censored by someone on board, I think, and we have of course to be very careful of what we say. I certainly have promised myself the treat of coming home overland though, for the sea's no use to me in present conditions. The Padre, Rev. Maitland, has been so good to me and I am



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very fond of him' He sleeps in his hammock right above me, and until I was ill I used to take a great delight in tucking him in. The Quartermaster, whose room I was to share, took ill and was unable to join us, so I have not had his company on board at all. Harry Eastwood, my London and Ripley partner, got a shakedown in the 2nd officer's room and so I've seen less of him too, but we've all been so upside down with the weather, etc., that things have been at sixes and sevens. We occasionally have boat drill and have been allotted our places in the boat, etc., provisions necessary enough but which we hope and pray may never be required. I'm longing to have a sleep in a good bed with my clothes off and my pyjamas on, and a good square meal at a table with a white cloth on and that doesn't shake. I may get that soon, but one can never tell. I'm hoping, too, for a big budget of letters at the Salonika address and I feel sure I won't be disappointed. I don't know if you'll be allowed to send me newspapers or not, but they'd go very high if I'm allowed to have them.

This is the first letter I've attempted to write and it seems to be decidedly scrappy, but when I get settled down ashore you will hear more regularly from me. You must never forget, too, that I can only give you the barest outlines. You must be my feed-pumps. There'll come a day—the sooner the better—when I can sit and tell you heaps of little things which can't be written. Put a ring round February 12th, the day after we sailed, at 3-45 p.m., and I'll tell you the story of that day. The days of miracles are not over, but *we* won. Possibly the most impressive ceremony I've ever been at was under the poop deck when 25 men stood with bared heads and with articles around them which they'd never had there before and thanked our Heavenly Father for His mercies. But we are here preserved and we trust with the opportunity before us of doing good work where we are bound for. Need I say that daily, hourly, you are all in my thoughts and prayers and I know I am always with you. Those thoughts and prayers which I know are offered up on my behalf, together with the knowledge that over us there rests a power greater than all the names of the world, have been my stay during these trying days of sickness and anxiety. Fondest love to all.

P.S.—The Doctor has just come to tell us our letters will be posted if we hurry up. This has been a glorious day, lovely sunshine and such a blue sea, land in sight all the time. I'll have a good sleep to-night with all my clothes off and that will be delightful though my little bed is hard. I'll try to cable my arrival at my destination.



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I'm feeling a lot better now and was able to take on my turn as orderly to-day, which is refreshing as I don't like to impose on other people by shoving my work on to them. The sight of all the beautiful scenery to-day has set me adreaming and promising myself all sorts of lovely stoppages at Italy, France, etc., on the way home. By that time you will have learned to do without me at the office so well that an extra week or two won't matter. I do hope news of Jack is good. It will soon be March, and I pray he may be sent to Aldershot.

I must close this now with fondest love to all.



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SALONIQUE

4th March, 1917.

MY DEAR FOLK,

I had a long letter written to you but the Major has just come aboard to tell us that he didn't post them as from information received they would not pass the Censor. Now I fear I can tell you very little news, only to reassure you that I'm here and well and profoundly grateful for all the mercies that have been shown me since I left home. I had hoped after Carson's last speech, which we read at last port, that I might have been able to give you a diary of the trip. I wonder if you can realize how glad I am to be at an end of the voyage and looking out on dry land? I am looking forward with eager anticipation to the day when I can sit and tell you all my news and experiences over the fire or a good dinner—and one would go high!

We had much better weather after Gib. was passed and with the exception of one spell of about 24 hours I was quite safe on my feet. We were all given duties to do aboard, which helped to pass the time to an extent. Games were at a discount.

I can't give you any idea up to the present of our movements, but I'll keep dropping you small scrappy notes just to say I'm well and give you any information I'm allowed. We are all hoping for a day or two ashore before taking up work in earnest, but it's very questionable if we shall get it. I'd like to try to see Jimmy Holmes if he is here. I have his address, but then Aunt Jessie wrote he had been sent away to recover from an attack of malaria. As I write to-night (Sunday) some of the boys are playing bridge, others are listening to our gramophone (a present from the President of the Committee in London). The weather to-day has been perfect: clear, bright sky and quite warm in the middle of the day but cold at night. We were all dressed up this morning, but the return of the Major told us we had nowhere to go, so we had to uupack and arrange to stay here to-night.

I find the last page of my first letter can go, so I'm sending it.

An Irish boy called Mitchell has been a gem to me. When I was ill he helped me all the time and in the Med. when I again felt queer he took my early morning watch for me. His father must be very wealthy for he sails a 40-ton yacht on the Clyde, and Mitch has everything he needs of the very best. To-day we are all wreathed in smiles, and the chatter last night going to bed was uproarious. Our little cabin under the poop was a palace. I had done a morning's washing early in the week, and sported a nice clean suit of pyjamas and took off my clothes



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for the first time since I wrote you. I'll write soon again when I get your letters and will likely add a line before posting.

Now that it's over I'm glad I've come through it. I feel the same Grace and Help given me on the voyage will be mine to the end, and the adventure will always loom large in my life. I can't write just what I think or want to say—only hope what I've written will reach you safely.

With fondest love to all, not forgetting the bairns.

P.S.—I'll cable if I can when I get ashore : it will likely be to-morrow. In any case the Major has cabled headquarters and they are to advise our parents of our arrival. The Major hasn't been able to get our letters, but we hope for them to-morrow. What a joy it will be to hear from you all, as I hope to. You can always keep me posted and I hope you will, for the home ties are those that hold strongest now. I re-read lately all your final letters and they were an inspiration for the dark days which lie ahead.



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(*An uncensored letter, sent through a member of the Convoy returning home, and delivered to Miss Horne in London on 19th March.*)

SALONIQUE,

4th March, 1917.

MY DEAR ONES,

I wonder can you realise with what profound gratitude I am writing this letter. The voyage is ended, the most momentous three weeks of my life. We sailed up last night in the dark and I had my first look at this place from the deck of the ship this morning. The weather to-day is simply perfect, cold night but clear crisp sunny day and quite warm too. We had an aeroplane raid by the enemy this morning by way of a welcome. The C.O. has gone ashore and we are now awaiting his return to know what we are to do. The journey since last I wrote has been none too pleasant—a much quieter sea except for a day or two, but constantly in fear and trepidation of Fritz. I noticed in a small communique which we read at last port that Sir Edward Carson announced that from 1st February names of ships attacked by submarines were to be published, so within limits I presume the Censor will keep his blue pencil to himself.

You will have gathered from my last that we had a very serious attack 12th February at dusk. A cold, dark night it was, too, when Fritz popped up. We were all at tea at the time when the roar of our gun sent us flying to our lifebelts. We were all marshalled on the boat-deck, and whilst we were going there a second and third shot rang out. Our second shot got him, and but for the courage and true aim of that little gunner I fear I'd never have written this. In the darkness we could not tell how far he was damaged, and we stood facing death for over an hour fearing lest he should be able to creep ahead and let fly. Our S.O.S. signals brought a T.B. Destroyer after us and by seven o'clock we had the order to dismiss. The gunner is having an inscribed gold watch as a memento from us, and he deserves it too. I can't give you any more details now, but we are distinctly inclined to the belief that the sub. is safely in Davy Jones' locker not so far from the shores of our beloved isle.

In the Med. they were so aggressive a convoy was lent to the ship and we each took our watches on board. There were during daylight always seven men on watch and five at night, and still we were dodging here and there, turning in our course, cruising



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about waiting for the dark to slip through dangerous areas. On 24th February at 10-40 a.m. I was sitting on the starboard side of the poop-deck and had just got up to go for something in the cabin, but I waited for a few minutes and then went to the port side—just in time to see the wake of a torpedo as it flew at a terrific speed right for where I was standing. It rose clean out of the water like a big red fish, with a whirr as the propeller tore round, then it dived in again. I just yelled the one word "Torpedo!" and flew. You never saw a number of men disappear as quickly in your life. In about one minute we were all on the deck with our belts on, but once more we were to be saved as by a miracle. I swear, and others who saw the brute will bear me out, that had that missile struck where it was pointing when I saw it leave the water it would have caught us about the poop deck, but for some inexplicable reason—call it what you will, I know what I considered it—it swerved and caught in the swirl of the water from the screw and was carried a few feet past our stern. Fritz had seen us coming, waited with only a few inches showing a long way off, and when we reached his mark let fly. Had he calculated one knot faster it was all u.p. with us. He of course submerged and disappeared before we could find him. You see, had this ship been full of cork or something like that, we'd have had a chance, but as it was, one true aim and no belts or boats were needed. You can guess what the next eight days were like. We were twice again in our belts but these were unnecessary, though it was trying to the nerves all the same.

There wasn't a man aboard who didn't heave a big sigh of relief when the anchor was dropped, and I doubt few would face the journey again under the same conditions. On the way home my sea journey ends at Brindisi if I can manage it. The percentage of souls aboard, too, who have been taught by bitter experience to think a little deeper and realise their true position is great. Men have talked to me and to each other on topics seldom mentioned before, I fear, in their lives, and have turned their thoughts to help other than their own. And yet through all I felt in my heart deep down that the day would dawn for me when I'd see the harbour at the close of the voyage.

The Captain was the acme of patience and care and he deserves all credit. I'd go back with him light ship without half the dread I had on the outward passage. About three or four days from here the weather was calm and the sea like glass. The moon, too, was becoming dangerous, and the Captain longed for a heavy breeze and clouds. Within twenty-four hours she



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was on her beam-ends again and remained so till we were well into land. It was stormy enough to send us below again. The food did not improve, and the little things bought at Gib. proved of great value. We are all wondering how we shall fare ashore, but that remains to be seen. Our doings, too, are quite undecided yet, but I'll keep writing as often as I can. I'm longing for letters, but will scarcely get them until to-morrow.

On the whole the men all round were splendid. I was on one Court of Honour on three men who disobeyed. We sentenced them to little extra duties for two or three days. One Irish boy named Mitchell, whose father lives in Dublin, was wonderfully kind to me and took my early watch when I was ill.

At this juncture I begin a new letter. I had an extra page written, but as it was mild I let it go in my last. After I had written the foregoing I had to hold it back because of the Censorship reports. One of our convoy, Roper, has been so ill that the doctors here are going to send him home, and he has promised to take this letter and post it in England, so that I'm speaking now quite plainly. The journey here was *terrible*, to put it mildly. I would have slept contentedly had we had an ordinary cargo, but with over 4,000 tons of ammunition and explosives of all kinds on board it was enough to shake the nerves of the strongest. As someone said, if we got hit the ship wouldn't go down, she'd go up! We were not convoyed, but the Government mapped out our route for us. The tragic event of February 12th happened 12 miles south-west of the Tuskar Light off the Irish coast, and 20 miles from land. You can imagine how we waited in the gathering darkness for that crash which in God's mercy didn't come. We believe the sub. sank, for several of us distinctly saw the explosion of our second shot. The range was only about 400 yards and we must have blown her periscope and base of conning tower out of the water. It resolved itself into a question of whether she could get her torpedo tube in line to fire before we hit her. In the dusk she evidently thought she wouldn't be discovered and had not Gunner Hayes happened to be drawing his tarpaulin round to keep out the breeze he'd not have sighted her.

The direct route in pre-war days is under 3,000 miles, yet we steamed over 5,000. The Croix Rouge here say they had given us up as we were seven days behind their reckoning, though not behind Government time. Our course was very wide. Instead of the Cornish coast we struck across round the South of Ireland, cruised up and down Dingle Bay till dusk, and



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then shot far out and went straight towards America in the night. When we turned down parallel with the Spanish coast we were 420 miles out. We went south even of Gib. about 150 miles from Madeira, then turned in and hit Spain at Cadiz, doing the last 100 miles in the dark. That night there were subs. round and we were warned to be ready. The boat was all over with rafts and spars in case any should be blown clear. There was also a deck cargo of 16 railway trucks which were a decided source of worry to Captain Graham in the heavy seas. After Gib. we hugged the Spanish coast past Malaga to Cape Almeria, then at night shot straight across to the African coast, which we hugged like glue till past Bizerta. We kept two or three miles—sometimes less—from land all the way, so I've seen every bay and inlet. It was ten miles south-west of Cape Tenez that our second attack took place of which I've spoken earlier. The bridge saw the torpedo a long way off and the third mate (a little Irish boy from Cork called Maguire, with a broad Scotch accent) rammed his helm to starboard. It's an eerie feeling to think that had the sub. fired one second earlier he'd have caught us. Our wireless was continually getting messages to be careful here and there. One Sunday we cruised six or seven hours in a small bay waiting till dusk : it was so easy for the beggars to watch us along the coast and let fly.

Leaving the African coast we headed towards Malta, which we passed 60 miles south. Here again in a heavy sea we cruised about wasting six hours in order to slip in between Crete and the mainland at night. I must confess the African sea frightened me, but we picked up two patrols who signalled us and passed us along from zone to zone. On Friday night we had another scare and were in our belts for nearly an hour at dusk, but it turned out to be another boat and we couldn't help feeling amused for she was dodging us and we her until we found out. It would have been so different had we had a harmless cargo and a sporting chance of fighting or at least taking to the boats.

This is Tuesday night, 6th, and although here since Saturday evening, I've not been ashore yet. All the cars are away and only seven of us aboard, and we leave in the morning. We are to have two or three days here to get the cars ready, stores, etc., and then we trek away about 150 miles to a place in Albania called Koritza, where our headquarters will be. We take our wounded from a hospital there, the nearest to the firing line, and run them 50 miles to the hospital at Florina. The roads are, I believe, terrible, not worthy of the name, but I think we will be able to do the work, or most of it, in daylight. I expect we



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shall sleep in our cars at Florina and come back next day. Of course, should there be an advance we follow. The French are sending a cook and two or three orderlies, and we have a lot of stores with us, so we shall fare not so badly from a food point of view. That's all I know.

To-day I was forced to think very much of home when I was discharging our stores into a barge, the bottom of which was covered with oats with an odd grain of maize through it. The oats were very like Canadians. I think I said earlier that the Croix Rouge had promised us faithfully to send us home on a hospital ship in comfort. The food on board here was very poor, bread so fresh as to be uneatable, potatoes rotten, and meat likewise and like leather. I could put up with it ashore where I could have worked it through, but to a seasick person, ugh! I'm even now dreaming of a heaped plate of wheatmeal porridge and a jug of cream, but that's a long way off yet. We had four Royal Engineers on board who were going out with 200 carrier pigeons in connection with the signalling corps.

The harbour here, a big open bay, is full of ships of all creeds and classes, and a large number are being discharged into lighters. How they keep the armies fed I know not. Food is scarce and there are two meatless days. I've had brown maize bread for three days now. A party of 30 Tommies has just come aboard to-night as a guard over the ammunition, and they have white bread with them; I'm buying some for breakfast as I've some good jam laid by. I got some tinned stuff at Gib. also some oranges, etc., but that's all gone now. Some of the French quaymen about to-day had lovely white bread and butter—I was almost braining one man to get his! A good feed can be obtained ashore, though, and I'm having a gorge for the next few days no matter what it costs. Eggs are about 6d. a time—I haven't had one for a month almost.

The town, I am told, is stinking, and our chief predicts a very rotten time for us physically. I'm quite content to go through with it, however, and am wonderfully calm and happy despite all the conditions. How much I'll appreciate home when I get back! The natives, I hear, are a rotten lot, dirty and depraved: they need to be wiped out completely. In case Roper's letters should be watched I'm asking him to post this to Jessie Horne and she will address it in her feminine hand to you. In acknowledging please don't comment much—say you received Jessie's letter. When writing also mention dates of letters received and then I'll know if any are going astray.



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Wednesday, 9th.

I've got off the ship and am now in what is called billets. It sounds nice but consists of an empty shed with earthen floor. It is next to the French Motor Transport and the boys of that corps, headed by their lieutenant, are very kind to us. I got here yesterday. Some of the boys landed the day before, and they had the worst of it. There were only seven of us left on the ship and we had extra good food for the occasion and I slept with the 3rd mate. Hampson, my little chum, had been made quartermaster and mess president. The French cook seems to be able to work wonders out of nothing. We had shredded bully beef and chip potatoes, soup, cheese, and bread, and it tasted absolutely "it." The water is so precarious I have to drink French red wine, but a quart is quite safe. They have served us out with a tin plate and mug, also knife, fork and spoon, plus a water bottle. I've spent all day up till 2 o'clock on my car getting it ready to move off. I was going on leave at one, but it was cancelled owing to some French countess coming to inspect us at four. I hope to-morrow, however, to get the whole day with Hampson and will try and find out if James Holmes is still here or in Malta. We are all quite delighted with the French food after the ship's fare. I slept last night on top of four Dunlop tyre boxes—have a small kapock mattress and three blankets, but still it's hard! The weather is warm but up where we are going it will be cold, but don't worry, I've enough to keep two men warm. On the way out here I came on top of a motor lorry with the men's kits and passed the French and British Headquarters, also Venizelos' house, with a soldier on sentry, and last but not least General Sarrail passed us. The town is all military out this way. There are some lovely houses overlooking the bay, but the interior of the place is dingy and dilapidated. To-morrow I'm hoping to have lunch at the Cafe Roma or one of the very few hotels worthy of the name. We have a good quantity of stores to augment our French rations: bovril, milk, tea, sugar, dates, prunes, butter, etc., but I expect all will be needed.

I got a rowing from the Major yesterday in the wrong, and proved myself so much so he had to come and climb down. Then he blamed Mitch, but I cleared Mitch too and got the proper man in the soup—one of the section leaders or else the C.O. himself. We expect to go on our way to-morrow or next day, so I'll have to give this letter to Roper to-night or to-morrow.



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Friday.

I got to town all yesterday evening and this one and have had lunch, or dinner rather, in the best restaurant. That doesn't say much for it, but I was hungry, and they don't owe me much! I hear my friend goes early in the morning, so this will have to be slipped to him in a few minutes. What a place! Soldiers of every nation and description around. Add to this the natives, principally in a filthy condition, and the niffs as received along the streets, and you have a place the like of which I never saw. I shall try to tell you all about it later on when I see you.

The Countess Reinach inspected us yesterday and was full of compliments. She was so pleased she gave us a present of an iron bedstead each. This evening news has come that the whole convoy has been reconstructed and is now in three sections, and I am under Capt. Richardson, worse luck. We have to travel with much decreased luggage, too, and things owing to lack of transport are to be much chopped about. The place of our destination too is changed. We go to Sakulevo, near Florina, on the Monastir road. I must run. Best love to all, my very best love. With all these changes, etc., things look blue, but what can we do? Our bedsteads, etc., have to be left behind, also all the goods I bought to-day. I'll write soon again when we reach our destination. Love.



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SALONIQUE,

11th March, 1917.

MY DEAR IDA,

Our letters now have all to be censored by our section-leaders, so it simply means I can only tell you that I am well and working very hard. The weather is superb and I do hope it will continue, for it makes things so much pleasanter and easier when the roads are dry. I still continue to have a prodigious appetite, the reaction after the starvation of the journey and the open-air life. Our head cook is sitting beside me as I write, and he is an exceptionally decent Frenchman.

I found cousin J. D. Holmes has gone back, so I didn't see him. Our work is very hard and strenuous: I fancy by the time my agreement is worked out I shall be a grease speck. We have bell tents to sleep in, and I like them fairly well up to the present. Our baggage had to be so limited there is a shortage of reading matter. Can you send me the Portadown "News" and "Express," also a "Belfast Weekly Telegraph" each week? These will have to be sent direct through the publishers, not through you at all or they will be torn up. If you could also get a magazine or two through occasionally it would be excellent.

We are all feeling fairly fit. I tried to go to Church to-day but wasn't able to find a church in the place we were in. I will have a lot of tales to tell you (about August). I'm very anxious to know how Emily is getting along with the car. I hope if I'm spared to get a Vauxhall soon and I'll give E. as far as the Dobbin of a start to Armagh. This is all for a week. I'm very fit, but tired, and to-morrow will be a terror, so I must sleep. My fondest love goes out to you all. My thoughts and prayers are with you daily too, and soon I shall be with you again to bother you—but there's lots to be done before then.



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SALONIQUE,

16th March, 1917.

MY DEAR EMILY,

Since I wrote last I've not had a single hour to myself. I can only say I'm well and have had to let my belt out a hole. My work is very hard at times, but I'm succeeding, and was one of four chosen for special duty and led the lot. I've plenty of food—can eat it, too! I'm trying to write three notes in about ten minutes before turning in. Besides, I want to have this note sure to reach you and find why there aren't any letters. I'm longing for news. Glad the war news is so encouraging. You will only get scraps like this until I see you again.

Love to all, and don t forget to send this on to Nellie. I do trust she is stronger and happy. I'm really campaigning now with a vengeance, but will tell you all soon.



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23rd March, 1917.

MY DEAR PAPA,

I'm quite well, and very busy. The work is very tiring at times, but the little marks on the side of my car are increasing rapidly, and each one denotes help to some poor suffering soul. I wonder how Emily would like to drive her A.C. over these roads—but I'm getting used to them now. I only wish you could see them. I can't tell you where I am, nor would you be any the wiser on an ordinary map if I did. But I occasionally go to sleep with the sound of the guns in my ears. We get a French journal nearly every day and can thus keep partially in touch with the trend of the war, but I long, simply hunger for, news from home.

The sights I see here will remain in my memory as long as I live: the endless stream of humanity passing to and fro, of all creeds and classes, but all dressed for war. The stupendous task of keeping the Armies supplied is a continual marvel to me. I get up every morning round about six o'clock and at eight we are all clothed, fed, and our patients aboard. Poor fellows, heroes every one, bearing their wounds and pain with fortitude almost fanatic. Yesterday a soldier outside our camp tried to open the fuse of a shell which he thought was dead. A loud report, and in five minutes we had him on a car. He's gone west, and I can't get the sight out of my eyes. It brought war home to me as never before, and I pray the end may not be far off. We are a divided convoy now. The other five-eighths are at another place and I do hope and pray they stay there. We have the pick here, and the pick for a C.O. One of our boys (three out of the seven are Irish) has gone a long journey and hopes to bring up some of our extra food which was left behind on account of the roads, so we are dreaming of butter and jam. The rations supplied by the French are very fair, and we economise to an alarming extent. Yesterday we got a little mess tent rigged up and to day are eating like human beings again. We have to boil all our water and carry it some distance too, so the wine ration we get is most acceptable. We add a little water and save it like gold dust.

We sleep in a bell tent and I'm quite comfy and have got used to the ground. Ida will, I'm sure, be quite surprised to hear that I'm the best riser of the lot, and the C.O. looks to me to get the boys up. He told us yesterday that for so far things had gone swimmingly, and unlike the other C.O. he has the knack of trusting us and leaving us alone, and he gets much



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better work from us too. Mitch, my dear Dublin boy, is by my side now, ever ready, ever steady, and I could get along with him to my last day. He hasn't the dash, energy, or indefinable something Carroll has, but when I found I was chosen with him I was glad. Did I tell you I had grown a moustache and am smoking a pipe? The tobacco the French give us is very strong, but I'm taking to it by degrees. All the same, a quarter-pound of light mixture now and anon would be acceptable. The thing I long for in the comfort line most is a good bath and someone to wash my clothes. I was up at the Serb hospital a few days ago for the first time delivering two patients and a lovely little doctor spoke to me. There were two ladies with him. They came over after I had saluted finally, and examined my car, then they spoke, and said the doctor told them I was Irish. They turned out to be two girls from Limerick who had been motoring here for the Red Cross but had gone into clerical work instead. I expect they found it too tall an order.

I long to tell you about my work and surroundings, but I want this to reach you. Last Sunday morning the French Commandant invited us up at 8-30 and it turned out to be for Mass. It was in French, and we were about a dozen or so. Sunday makes no difference, we work just the same as week-days. For so far we've had no time scarcely to ourselves, for our camp had to be made from nothing. If the other C.O. and his tribe will only stay away we'll be delighted, but once they come we're done for—he's impossible. We've built a workshop house out of petrol tins, and it's a marvel of ingenuity.

Please get them all to write me—Willie about the business, Ida, Nellie and Emily various spheres of gossip, and you just as you only can write about things they leave out. Annie will be anxious about Jack. I pray he's at school. Don't forget the "Weekly Telegraph" or some such paper, and tell Emily to 'phone Molly Wilson and give her all the news, also remember me kindly to all inquirers, Hugh Stoops and those in the office. Tell Hugh to pass along a kindly word to my clients in Portadown, not forgetting those at the Bank.

Fondest love to all.



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*(Another uncensored letter sent through "Uncle" Mills, and received on 28th May).*

31st March, 1917.

My Dear Father,

I'm writing this in the Hotel Continental at Salonique : why you will learn later. I've so very much to tell you all that I scarcely know where to begin. The three leading Irishmen of the convoy—Cardew, Mitchell and I—were chosen to come down here to bring up stores and also to bring down three men of the convoy, Capt. Hudson, Capt. Richardson, and Mr. Mills, on their way home. On arrival here I went to 13 Bis and found five letters from home awaiting me. The joy they gave me was wonderful, you have no idea with what avidity I read them, and each in its way was separate. I'm glad my letter from Gib. reached you, and also that it gave so much pleasure to all. I do hope my letter sent per my friend of the hospital ship reached you safely. This one dear " Uncle " Mills has promised to post for me, so that I'm going to speak out straight for the second time.

I'll growl first and tell you of our very miserable specimen of humanity in the shape of our C.O. He started in Salonique with four section leaders and a doctor. The doctor was second in command. Without a word of warning he deposed the doctor and put a captain in charge. This made a decided and unflinching enemy of the doctor. On the way up from here he bullied everyone so much that one terrible day, of which more anon, Captain Hudson through overstrain and worry fainted and ended up in hospital with a slight stroke. Exit one section leader. Later on Capt. Richardson lost his nerve, overturned his car, and —exit No. 2 section leader. Mills, with a third section leader driving Capt. Henderson, had a serious slide-slip on a terrible road, lost control and his car turned over a drop of 10 to 20 feet and we dragged the two men from under, dear old Uncle with a fractured rib and Capt. H. unhurt, almost miraculously. Exit Mr. Mills. Capt. Henderson tried to get away from the other section leader's job and go home, but he was unable. The treatment the major gives his section leaders and men is indescribable, and the three wounded men go straight to headquarters on arrival at London to make a report regarding the condition of affairs here and to say we are being treated as dogs, not men.



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Now I'll begin from Salonique. We all left here and on the first day made a village, by name Vertekop, some 80 kilometres away. The road was fairly level, but a wretched surface. Outside a town called Vardar, No. 16 broke her back axle, thanks to an overload. We all waited on the plain whilst the C.O. and Capt. Robertson went back. As we lay on the roadside we saw the French guns from Vardar belching away at a horrible rate, guided by an aeroplane. We couldn't understand why at first and thought it only practice, but soon learned that they were shelling brigands in the marshes. It seems the old road to Monastir is about impassable, whilst on the new many stragglers have been shot by robbers. We understood really then for the first time why the French had served us out with carbines and ammunition. Up in the mountains these bands rove around and do many dastardly deeds. It seems we were obliviously sunning ourselves on one of the worst pieces of road.

The continuous stream of lorries, mules, soldiers, etc., was wonderful, and I was then, as I am still, spellbound by the stupendous task of keeping these armies going. An Italian lorry passing along told us that Vertekop, where we were bound for, had been bombed an hour or two before by the German airmen. This was joyful. We arrived at about 7 o'clock and ran up our bell tents in an open field a mile or more outside the town. Next day we had a shorter run over very hilly country with an execrable road, and camped at Ossova beside a lake. The scenery was superb with the snow-clad mountains all around. The lake, too, was splendid, and reminded me quite a lot of Switzerland. We were off early in the morning again, and this was the tragic day of the journey. It took us 15 hours or so to make 10 or 12 miles to Banitza. It had rained during the night, and with hills the like of which you've never seen and a surface almost impossible for any car we had a day of it. The cars were cruelly and needlessly overladen, and we had to push them up when they stopped. It was at the first great hill that Capt. Hudson, my former section-leader, gave in. Mitch and I worked like two tigers until we almost dropped with exhaustion. The second hill—or series of them—was even worse, and Capt. Robertson, the second in command, took over the job and by the labour of the men employed in making the road we got the cars over by sunset. The C.O. had in the meantime, after cursing all round, gone on in the staff car.

It began to rain, and we camped in our ambulance that night with discontent and cold prevailing and little in general to eat. Mitch was with me and was all in. I gave him some brandy,



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and by begging and cadging got a decent meal together so in the end we fared not so badly. On the last part of the journey Capt. Henderson was driving in the lead with Mr. Mills. Mitch and I were No. 3. Suddenly I saw the lead charge the bank on the high side, and knowing who was driving Mitch shouted "that car's over the cliff." She dashed back and forward several times and then did a clean somersault into a field. The man lost his head and the long ambulance body simply wagged the car *ad lib*. We pulled up like fury and I wouldn't have given you sixpence for the chance of their lives. We all lifted the body and dragged Uncle out groaning and scarcely conscious. Henderson crawled out himself. Capt. Robertson went into Banitza for the doctor, but on his not returning we took Mills in one of the cars, crawling in the dark, and landed him and Hudson in hospital.

Next morning we were at it again and made an easy run of some 20 kilometres to a place called Sakulevo. This we understood was to be our headquarters and we pitched our tents there. Scarcely had we done it when the news arrived that the convoy was to-be divided and we all prayed we might be sent away from the C.O. Sakulevo is on the railway and is a base for French, British and Italians, one vast camp of stores, ammunition, etc. It was bombed a few hours before we arrived. Late in the afternoon I was called in with Mitch, Martin the chief mechanic, and Hodges, another self-called expert. Capt. Robertson told us we were chosen to go to Slevica with him to carry on on our own, Capt. Henderson would come as general factotum and the doctor also. The C.O. and his tribe were to go in the morning to Florina, and later on we were to be joined by Cardew, the third Irishman, who had taken the broken car to Salonica, also by George and Frank Brown, two Manchester boys, who also had messed up a car and were left behind to get it fixed up. I was rather surprised at my inclusion, for this lot includes the cracks of the convoy. I was relieved, too, for I felt no matter how hard the road I was going to work for a reasonable reasoning man. Next morning we parted, and section leaders and every man in the Slevica lot heaved a sigh of relief when the tyrant's motor drove away. I having the most heavily laden car led the convoy, and slowly we trekked up to Brod, the Italian headquarters, thence three or four more kilometres through the valley of the Cerna to our village. We camped in a blinding snowstorm, but by night were safely tucked in.



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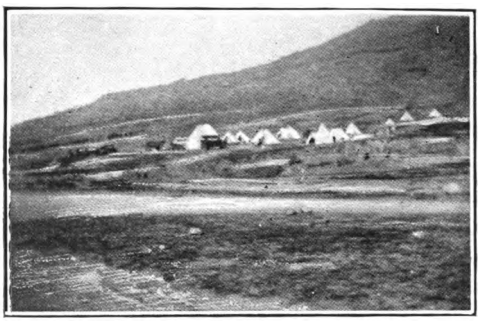
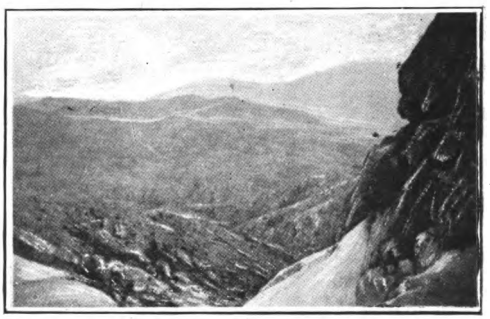


**Our First Camp, Slivitza.**
**Bomb Shelters in bank close by.**



**View from near the Camp.**

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In two days we started taking up our wounded at the little tent hospital five or six hundred yards away. One would be surprised how a car ever gets to the top of the hill where the hospital stands. We have to cross a stream twice and mount a terrible incline. One can always know whether one's car is in order before getting far from the hospital: if she's not pulling you can't get up, and if brakes are not seen to you'll come down to the tune of a certain accident. We take our wounded to Sakulevo, 18 kilos. away, over streams and ruts which would try the patience of any man and the mechanism of any car, but we worked well and hard, doing two trips a day and our repairs in addition. We breathed freely, feeling we were men, under a man, and were allowed to feel the nobility of the work we were doing. Robertson and Henderson trusted us, and told us so, and we helped each other, giving our best to those poor suffering ones, easing their pain and trying in every possible way to make their rough journey smooth. With my limited knowledge of French I talked to them, and at Sakulevo hospital and the Serb hospital already know quite a number of the officials. One of them gave me a handsome revolver as a present, and when I go and salute they shake hands and talk in the pleasantest way.

All we asked for was to be left alone, and then without a moment's warning in comes the C.O. and all his tribe. They arrived last week in a sandstorm followed by blinding rain. I was up out of bed at 4-30 pegging down broken tents, etc. Next morning our first word of greeting from the Major was a reproach to all in our tent. Now all is chaos again and we begin to count the days till June 30th. None would dream of staying beyond that time under his leadership: they'd face the trenches first.

The morning before last Mitch, Cardew and I were told off to be ready for Salonika in the morning, and I spent the whole day getting my car in readiness for her trial. At 7 o'clock on the morning of our departure I was told to take another one. We (Hampson the quartermaster and I) made the journey in good time, arriving at 5 o'clock after a run of 200 kilos. It took the Major and his party four days to do the upward journey, yet he wanted Hampson to send me back this morning to make the journey in one day alone, in a car in which I could not lie down. I'm not an expert mechanic and if I had had a break I'd have been left on the road perhaps all night. Hampson is good at excuses so I've remained, taxi-cabbing him all over Salonika on his rounds. We leave to-morrow at six. The



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journey may be finished in one day, but I doubt it and I hope not. You will find this letter a kind of piece-meal, but it has been written in snatches on my knee outside offices, etc., whilst looking after the car. Capt. Hudson told me last night he had cabled home some time ago to prevent three wealthy men coming out to join us. They had agreed to provide their own cars and work free but Hudson on account of the C.O. cabled them to stay away.

The weather up to now has been lovely and I've had an appetite like a horse. I'm about 11 st. 4 lbs. We've had a little butter and jam lately and an allowance of 7 smokeable cigs. per day. Last night on my arrival here we all went round to the Continental and I had a 10-franc dinner. I haven't had an egg since I left so I had two omelettes, and one to-day! Salonika is quite gay these bright days with the soldiers everywhere—perhaps it appears more so to me after the deserted country. One can scarcely realise how much these countries are suffering and have suffered through the Balkan War. On my journey from Slevica to Sakulevo I daily pass villages absolutely in ruins with scarcely a house intact. The poor people are numerous and yet the soil and country are rich and would pay cultivation well. Everywhere you will see little patches of ough tombstones where the soldiers of this and the last war lie buried—everyone mourned and loved by his friends, it may be only a few, but there are sad hearts all the same. I sometimes ask myself as I drive along and hear my patients groaning and crying out in their pain (and that is about the hardest thing of all to bear), when will it all end and those nations be at peace again. It is hard to see the civilization that ruled the world before we were known as a nation crumbling away in the dust. The view that meets my eye every day as I mount the ridge is one of superb beauty. The long row of hills is as yet snowcapped, and with the sun shining on them they give me courage at times to go on with the work in good heart during the day. Now that our tyrant has arrived I fear it will be difficult for us to get into the work again as we should but I'll try hard.

Last Monday three of us had a most exciting morning. We were on our way home from Sakulevo when I heard rumbling noises ahead. Inside five minutes we were lying full length in a trench by the roadside along with half a dozen A.S.C. Tommies who had hurriedly left their waggons of ammunition and taken shelter from 14 German aeroplanes. We were within a few hundred yards of Brod at the time, and the Italian depot is there. As they hovered around I confess the atmosphere didn't



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strike me as being at all healthy. Two batteries of anti-aircraft guns opened fire as they came along, also machines, but no shots took effect. One bomb came hurtling and shrieking about 100-200 yards away and it was quite near enough. After that they hovered over Brod and we had a grand stand view of the bombs bursting. It was hellish, but only four people were killed. Next they made off to Sakulevo and tried to catch the railway station, but missed it and caught the Italian hospital instead. They also shattered a tent at which I had called for letters not an hour before.

I'm grateful and thankful I'm so well and up to the present have borne the strain, for every day we have to run the risks of these terrible roads. A few days ago I had to make a dash through a stream and up a severe incline with six inches of mud on it. About a mile of traffic was stuck up by some Italian lorries and when they got free two of us made a bolt for it. We got through and were greeted with a cheer as we got to the top. Mitch told me after that six inches either side and I'd have been over.

I'm so sorry Papa and Emily, also Ida, have been unwell and hope by this time all are feeling fit again. It is a very severe blow to Mrs. Liddell: I had read the account in the papers before the letter arrived. Will you please tell her and Mr. Liddell how much I feel for them. I mean to send a short note of welcome to Rev. and Mrs. Heney when I get an opportunity. The Mill news interests me very much and I hope some figures will be sent me after 31st March. I'm pleased about the War Loan and think it was the proper and only thing to do. They are going to issue us tobacco now so you needn't mind sending any. Thank Willie, Annie and Nellie for their letters; am so glad Nellie is getting along so well. I send love to all the colony and do keep writing me.

I'm finishing this in the Y.M.C.A. before going to dinner with the boys for the last time before we part. On my way here I bumped into a Belfast boy called Sinclair Neill, whose people know Papa very well. He was surprised when I spoke to him. Could I have "Public Opinion" each week when you've read it? I miss it quite a lot. I do trust this reaches you safely. There is some talk of our being shifted to Monastir; I hope not. I do hope the C.O. and his tribe goes and leaves us behind to go on with our work in peace and quietness.

Fondest love to all.



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*(Enclosure, marked "Personal.")*

My Deàr Papa,

I want to ask you to find out the best way to send me some money here. I don't need it now, but I may possibly get away from here 30th May. I think, however, it will most likely be 30th June. If I go home direct on a hospital or trading ship so much the better. If, on the other hand, I go *via* Brindisi and have a glimpse of Rome on the way I'd need £50 or £60.

Thanks for your letter. Emily gave me a little soldier's book which I've kept pretty close. Life out here and on the way out would not have been worth living away from a trust and faith in Him who giveth all. Somehow I feel His hand guiding my steps through the risks and dangers that flock around, for every day we more or less take our lives in our hands. Up to now I've found it hard to know why He put Major C where He did, but I may know later on. In any case my Heavenly Father has been nearer to me since I left home than ever before, and I only hope and pray that all may be well until the end. If I leave here early I may try to get sent to France under another and more possible commander. Fondest love.



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4th April, 1917.

MY DEAR IDA,

This week brought me five letters from home—Papa, Willie, Annie, Nellie and yourself. I was positively overjoyed to get them, and I have a sort of an idea there will be more to-day or to-morrow. I am hoping to hear soon that "Jessie" has written you. There should be another in about a fortnight's time or less. Several papers, too, have arrived and were most welcome. I'm so sorry to learn you have all been on the sick list and hope by now Feddal has ceased to be a hospital. Perhaps I should bring my ambulance home. I saw the account of Mrs. Liddell's trouble in the paper, and knowing how much her hubby and children were to her I deeply sympathise.

Please keep writing all of you. I hunger for letters here more than even in Queensland and all that pertains to home is of deepest interest.

I am quite well and growing fatter too. The weather is beginning to get warmer and I shall need all the adipose tissue I can get. The convoy is all together now, but we may be moved along again all of us, any time. Three of us were chosen for a long run this week to the base, and singularly enough, old Ireland's representatives had it to themselves—Cardew, Mitchell and Clow going. We got the job over without a hitch, not even a puncture, and this, I think, would almost constitute a record. I still feel it a hardship that I can't write to tell you where I am or what I'm doing, but war is war and you must just wait. We are all getting along fairly well now and doing good hard work. As usual, I've begun to be friendly with the officials at the places we visit and find considerable pleasure in meeting them and trying to talk French.

Nellie's letter pleased me immensely, especially the tone of satisfaction over the work she is doing. I'm glad Jack is well and do hope he will get promotion soon. He has worked hard for it. By the papers you seem to be having to exercise further economies in Blighty. Up to now I've never had to go on an empty stomach, and any talk of scarcity out here, as far as I have seen, is untrue. We are all well fed and well housed too. You are quite right, Ida, I shall have heaps to tell you all when I get back again. I think one of the first things I shall do after having some wheatmeal porridge, *cream*, and two eggs and bacon, will be to take the car out on the level road and let her all out, just to feel what a level road is like again. You make me quite envious speaking of skating and such frivolities as the pictures.



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For so far I've not heard from T. J. C., but expect his will be in the next batch. I did some washing last night in cold water with sunlight soap. I don't think I ever saw a suit of pyjamas that needed washing more, and contrary to my expectation they look quite O.K. this morning. I managed' to get a little stretcher (bran-cart) into my tent and have slept so comfortably these last two nights that it was with difficulty I remembered 6 o'clock. Ida, just fancy my getting up at six o'clock every day! Of course, I'm always tucked away by 10 o'clock or 10-30 at latest and often it is earlier for I grow tired at night. The traffic on these roads of late has been exceptionally heavy, and driving, in consequence, is work for the tough nerved. It has begun to be somewhat mechanical with me, and I feel I could take a Ford to Belfast through the fields. My own little car wouldn't stand the roads here one week, but I'd love to have a drive out of her again. Numbers of the boys are having their hair cut like gaol-birds. I had mine done too lately to need to resort to such drastic treatment, but when the weather grows warmer I expect I shall succumb. We have now got jam, butter, chocolate, tobacco and cigs. in our rations, limited quantities of course with biscuits occasionally, and this morning I really and truly had a slice of bacon. We are to have the privilege also of buying ourselves a few eggs soon. I've ordered a dozen for myself (about as many as I dare ask) and I fancy when they arrive I'll suck the lot. We have frequent visits from aeroplanes—few of them French. Nasty little hornets but I'm getting used to dodging them now.

I must close this up now for I expect at any minute to get my call for the second trip. Perhaps there'll be letters at the other end. I do hope there will be.

Fondest love to all.



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17th March, 1917.

My Dear Emily

I received your letter of 18th March and Ida's of 21st on 15th April, and both of them gave me a great deal of pleasure, I assure you. They reached me away down towards the base like the first ones did. There was another two days' trip starting last Friday and Cardew and I were chosen to go. I did enjoy it for I got into a British camp and actually saw a football match between an A.S.C. team and one chosen from the base hospital. Our Quartermaster went the day previous down to the coast, then we two followed next day to within 75 kilometres, waited there over night, and met him on his way home. You see I'm handicapped because I can't mention the names of the places. These two days constituted one of the most interesting little excursions I've ever had. I slept in the apology for an hotel in the ancient capital of Macedonia—a town of some 10-12,000 people. Its situation, viewed at a distance is simply glorious, indeed, the journey all the way down from the mountains was a sight for the gods. Were such beauty in Ireland or England it would be one of the most favoured haunts in the whole country.

On the way down I got a glorious chance of calling at the Scottish Women's Hospital to see Nellie's friend, Miss Morrison of Lisburn. I found the hospital nestling amongst some trees close to a glorious lake. The green was such as would do credit even to Ireland. I was shown into a tent, but when Miss M. appeared I found it was the wrong person altogether. The Irish Miss M. had gone south two weeks before. I shall see her at the base if I happen to get down again.

I wish I could describe my night in that old town to you. All the time the one thing that kept before my mind was why has this place sunk into decay? Why has the whole country in fact? The streets were narrow and irregular with houses on either side that, in a town like ours of the same importance, would scarcely house cattle. Then I turned round a side street and found a few shops that were worthy of the name.

It was Easter Saturday and everyone was preparing his lamb for the slaughter. The streets were full of people and soldiers were to be seen everywhere. A large tree stood at a cross-roads, and close to this three brigands had been summarily dealt with a few hours before. In the hotel I asked Cardew in the morning if I could get my body washed, and the reply I got was, " Where the h—— do you think you are—in Picca-



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dilly ? " We bought a lot of eggs, about 100, and got them home over those terrible roads without smashing a single one. They were small and cost about 2s. 8d. per dozen. Oranges 3d. to 4d. each.

Next morning we got down to our meeting place too early, and had lunch to pass away the time with a very charming French officer. Afterwards we slipped down to a flowing stream and got into it. The water came straight from the snowclad mountains and was icy cold, but so refreshing. We laughed, and were like two school children on a pic-nic.

Later we chummed up with some French and Algerian soldiers who were fishing and tried to talk to them. The weather was very warm, with brilliant sunshine, and a radiance of colour all around, but one could not get away for long from the boom of the heavy cannon a few miles away. Having arrived about 3, by 4 o'clock we were on our way over the mountains again, up those tremendous hills, round corners with precipices hundreds of feet deep, where an accident has only one ending. We got home by nine o'clock, having completed the journey in good time.

Cardew is a very interesting Irishman from about Waterford. He is 35, suffers from deafness, and is an artist of no mean ability. A Bohemian of the Bohemians, he travels abroad on sketching tours on the Continent *ad lib*. He speaks French like a native, and both he and Mitchell are engineers of experience. Cardew is a cousin of Lord Rhondda and also a cousin by marriage of Sir Douglas Haig's. We've got a nice new tent up now and have our meals in comfort there. The gramophone has also been resurrected. Next Friday I hear there is to be a football match between the Convoy and the French camp behind, but I'm very doubtful if we can raise anything like a team. Next mail should tell me if you received Jessie's letter. Another of the same should reach you after very considerable delay. Since writing, I must say things have changed a lot for the better in many ways. On that score I shall have heaps to say when I see you, but now I'm dumb perforce.

We have not been very busy here of late : the calm before the storm we are led to believe, and everything points that way. We expect soon to be at it night and day. Anytime now the barking should commence and be devilish loud when it does. The 'planes have left us alone for some time now, perhaps because these last two days have been blowy and turned cold again. The only disadvantage to me besides dust is that when



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I wear Nellie's waistcoat I can't get my tunic to meet comfortably over it, I've grown so fat.

If you came out here you could have heaps of practice in starting and reversing motors. I'd love to see you drive, and perhaps you'll meet me at the train on my way home. The whole thing is to keep cool and think in an emergency of what you're doing. You are quite right, I could do with my wee bed splendidly now, for the dust in my tent gets into everything. I was much interested in all your church and philanthropic news, and also in all Ida had to tell me. I do hope Mr. Heney will turn out a great success.

With so many talking around it is not an easy matter to write as one would like. I hope to have more letters soon, including some from the males as well as the females in the family. A small bottle of saccharine would be greatly esteemed for out here sugar is scarce and difficult to obtain in any form.

I must run now for I may be called off at any minute. Fondest love and best wishes to all for another few days.



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12th May, 1917.

MY DEAR FATHER,

To-day there hangs in our messroom tent a short notice from the Medecin Divisionaire, returning grateful appreciation of our work for the past few days. This accounts for my remaining silent longer than I ought to. I mean, the work necessary to draw forth this comment has occupied our time so fully that writing has had to go to the winds.

Well, as I suspected, we've "flitted." On last Saturday we picked up our stakes and came along here, bag and baggage. A dozen mule carts helped in the moving. We are now 14 kilometres further up the mountains, at a height of 4,000 feet. Our last camp was about 2,000 feet up, so you see we are now carrying our wounded along a road 14 kilometres long and descending 2,000 feet in the journey. The last two klms. and the first two are about an even switch-back, so in 10 klms. or 6¼ miles, we descend, or on the return journey ascend, 2,000 feet. I really am of opinion that we are working one of the most dangerous and difficult roads in the Balkans. We have the honour, too, of being the first ambulance behind the lines. We go practically as far as the road is made. Our journeys down are the worst, and there is scarcely a day that some of us do not at times feel like the man who wanted the trousers of his new uniform in advance, when he first saw the big guns go off. (Censor forward !) Our "blessées" are brought to us on mule carts. Fords may be despised and heaps of jokes and wretched poetry be written about them, even including a very smart but entirely blasphemous parody on the 23rd Psalm, but I assure you they are a god-send in many ways. They'll climb anything, are light, and give several effective but entirely unmechanically correct methods of braking. For example, we simply *have* to run down for a great part of the way with our engine switched off though still in top gear and at the same time the reverse slightly in play and also the footbrake applied. I don't know any English car in which this would be possible, as two gears could not possibly be in play at the same time. Carroll, I think, knows how a Ford works and can explain.

Of course, going up the mountain side, only one edge of the road has a bank, the other is a cliff. In some places not very deep, in others—well, an accident doesn't quite bear thinking of. Heavy lorries come and go, not in scores but in hundreds, and add very much to our difficulties not only in occupying the road, but in making its surface almost impossible, especially in wet



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weather. The windings and hair-pin bends are marvels of engineering. There are places where our stearing gears will scarcely bring us round quickly enough, and I can easily throw a stone at several points on my fellow conducteurs as they wend their way down almost a mile away.

Our camp is pitched right at the summit amongst the rocks. You see the tents scattered here and there where sufficient earth can be found in which to drive in our pegs. I'm sorry I can't possibly tell you all I can see or hear from my tent where I now sit. This week several of our letters were returned from the base censor with rather pertinent remarks as to what would happen in the future if we weren't more careful, so Capt. R. put us all on our honour to be circumspect in our remarks.

When it was decided to come here, Capt. R. took us all into the mess-tent and made a straightforward manly speech to us. The Medecin Divisionaire had put the case to him in such a way that we hadn't any other course open to us than to obey. Men's lives were being lost through delay; we were a British convoy and much was expected of us. If our cars wore out we could have others, but the lives must be saved. Capt. R. pointed out to us our dangers, and the need of the greatest care and patience, and asked us to do our very best for him and our reputation, but especially for the poor suffering souls. Our late C.O.'s going has made such a difference. I shudder to think what would be the condition now were he still to the fore. If I only could get time and quiet to write, I'd try to mention and describe many of the places and incidents I see, but it's not easy. I think there may be a chance within the next month of writing "Jessie" again. If so, I'll of course do so.

There was a mail last night for the French camp above, and I got two papers, Mitchell a box of cigars (sent on March 9th), but there wasn't anything else for anyone. Two of our boys are at the base to-day, though, and I expect will bring some mail to-night or in the morning.

Strange to say, one of my greatest desires would be to take Willie from my tent to the base by car. He was always so nervous and anxious to give me instructions even when driving in Portadown that I'd simply love to let him have a run here. He wouldn't want a second, I know.

I have several things to do now, so I must be off. Good-bye and fondest love to all for another week.



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P.S.—Have you heard of the latest Ford speedometer? When going at 25 miles per hour it shows a green flag, at 30 a red one, and at 35 it automatically switches on to a gramophone which plays "Nearer my God to Thee." (Isn't Em. angry?)

P.P.S.—A small portion of the mail arrived—two letters for me, one from Nellie. She's like a clock.



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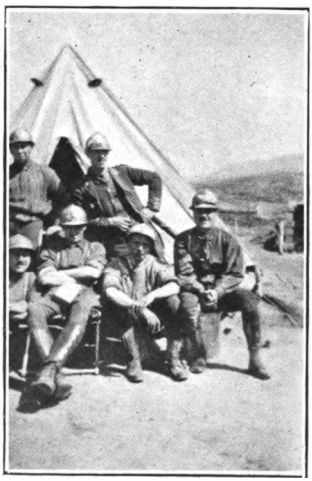
**Hodges, Mitchell, and F. Brown outside their tent, Malcolm's in the background.**



**Martin, G. Brown, Hodges, Frank Brown, Cardew, Malcolm, at Slivitza.**

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From 5th June (when the letter of 12th May arrived), there was a break of a month. Eagerly anticipating his next letter, the shock was great when on 16th July a telegram was received from the Croix Rouge in London to the effect that Malcolm had died from dysentry on 11th July.

The following letters all came to hand subsequently. They are arranged in order of date of writing, though received in inverse order.



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(*This letter was only received on 17th August and bore unmistakeable signs of having been immersed in sea water. Parts were undecipherable owing to the ink having run.*)

May Day, 1917.

MY DEAR FOLK,

I've just finished my second 40-kilometre journey and had my evening meal, so am now trying to get a letter off to you, but there is such a noise around: the gramophone is going, Cardew is squabbling with Hodges over the raking of a flower-bed in front of the C.O.'s tent, and it's not easy by any means to concentrate one's thoughts. I'm coming into my own now with regard to letters. The Doctor brought the mail last night and we all clustered round. When I was called out for the 9th or 10th time I was the target for many missiles—crusts, papers, etc., being flung at my head in profusion. Please do not think that my wounds were serious and that you are to stop writing. Keep at it so that I may still head the list, which I do now by easily 100 per cent. On Friday a second mail followed and out of that I got nine; then to-day I received six. The letters could not have arrived at a better time, for I've had a busy and somewhat strenuous time since last I wrote. I was under my car for a day or two putting iron supports on the body and manufacturing a new mudguard. There is such a large part of the car overhanging the back axle that the strain is very great, and all the cars had to be done. I managed to make a good job of mine all by my lonesome without the aid of the mechanics, so now I've some little standing among the experts!

The red-letter day of the Convoy was last Wednesday when our original C.O. took his departure for England. (I wrote you another long letter but it has been delayed and may be still more so. That letter contained a good deal of grousing and a great deal of news.) The fact that our C.O. has gone proves most conclusively that my letter was no exaggeration, but now that he is away many of our wrongs are righted. He went "unwept, unhonoured and unsung." Had he not gone, none of the officers and very few of the men would have remained. An inquiry was demanded and received. When a thing gets too hot that's the time to let it drop, and he did. I could not help thinking of our late Postmaster's reference to his servant—"She leaves of her own accord, and I am satisfied." We found a lovely little puppy this week which we've adopted. I suggested calling him "Major," and we did.



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Our new C.O. was our late 2nd, a Captain Robertson. I think I described him to you before. He's 6 ft. 2 in. and Scotch of course, a reasonable man who likes things done in a military way but who has our interests at heart and will treat us as the voluntary workers we really are. (It's singular that Papa and I should both be in the same box! That's meant for a joke.) Captain R. was wounded early in the war and as he lay on the ground was bayonetted through the lung by a vile Boche. The latter went on and was bending over another when Captain R. turned and with his failing strength emptied five chambers of his revolver right through him.

There was a huge joke to-day when Harry Eastwood was storming round kicking up a row because his saintly and dearly beloved fiancée hadn't written to him for three mails. Then someone gave him some letters to give to me and on looking at the writing he found one of them from *his* girl—whom of course I met the same time as he! I gave it to him to read.

The parcel of March 9th hasn't arrived yet. Several of the boys have notice of parcels sent about the same time but which haven't arrived, so I've not given up hope yet. I don't think I'd bother sending out anything that I don't specially ask for. Last week I got weighed and by a simple sum in arithmetic I converted kilos. into stones and pounds arriving at the astonishing figure 11 st. 8 lb.! This is five pounds over my palmiest Queensland days and will show you that I'm not starved. The French give us a cup of coffee at 6-30 and bread. At 10-30 we get soup, meat and a vegetable or substitute, with about half a litre of wine. In our tent we are so well able to look after ourselves that anyone who goes to the base has to bring us back little extras. Take yesterday for example. We got our hands on some eggs which Cardew brought. I had a small portion of oatmeal porridge, two eggs and bacon, and as I cooked them myself I bagged the gravy to dip my bread in. For 10-30 meal soup—I nearly mistook the washing-up water for it—rice and meat followed by some bread, butter and jam. The evening meal is the same at 6 o'clock, but later on several of us got into our tent, collared a Primus stove and made coffee, which we enjoyed with a tin of peaches, plum cake and chocolate. Do you wonder I'm getting stout? And still they talk of famine.

We had forty hours continuous rain last week. In Portadown that would mean a wet road but nothing extra. Here it means a veritable quagmire for miles, with here and there a lorry sunk to the axles, a car overturned and horse vehicles in a most



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deplorable condition. I was going across to the other side of the valley on Saturday and when about 100 yards or so over a bridge found it collapsing, so had to back. With an eight or ten feet drop such incidents are trying.

In addition to our other work we've been digging lately. As they do not allocate plots here for cultivation you can guess why we were digging. And as we had already dug but found we had not gone deep enough you may also go a stage further with your deductions. We have not used our ambulances for ourselves yet, but we have for our next door neighbours. To put it in vulgar but mild trench parlance (here a portion has been censored.) What do you think I found? I'm not joking—a real piano with white and black keyboard, and when you hit it it made music. I was pleased and they invited us to their . . . If I can get some of my music up from the base I'll offer to sing for them, but here one simply can't help smoking and my voice has suffered a good deal. A few days' rest would put that right though.

I do thank you all for your letters. Nellie tops the list with three. She made me green with envy by saying she was just going to see "Daddy Long-legs." A more beautiful little play I don't think I ever saw, and though if I were the hero I would play the last act in rather a different spirit yet I think the whole tone is magnificent. Don't miss it. It's one of those plays that when it is over you unconsciously put your hand to your cheek and find a tear there. I rejoice with Annie on Jack's well-earned promotion and am writing him. I love to hear of Kenneth and Brodie's doings. Such a big change I'll notice when I see them. Willie told me of W L. Cowdy's flattering remarks on my long letter. I shall have to begin to be careful and try to write at least in some sort of order. I only wish I could tell you freely of all I see and do here, and above all I do regret that I did not try to get a camera through. I could have made a collection of snaps worth having, but no camera could do justice to all one sees. The weather to-day has been perfect—a clear bright blue sky without a cloud. Right opposite my tent there is a mountain peak still covered with snow. The late rains have brought a fresh green to the grass and a deeper brown to the soil. To-day . . . . I suddenly came to the brow of the ridge and there lay before me away in the distance the whole mountain range with snow-clad tops right up to the heavens. The sun was shining on them in all his glory, making a blueish haze, which meeting the green grass and the brown earth made a sight for the gods. Alas, all over the plain . . . .



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cannot be mistaken the awful . . . . there a convoy of camions, the ceaseless activity of . . . . that I start dreaming, " when will it end ? When will the plains reflect the spirit of the mountain-peaks and this war-shattered continent be at peace ? "

But I must go to bed for it's late and I have a lot of energy to regain. I may add to this to-morrow.

Another lovely day. I've been reading your letters over again and found much to interest me. Ida (bless her wee heart) amused me immensely by giving me a piece of news about a portion of the yard. Nellie speaks of sending me trench shirts in a letter ! I don't quite understand what she means. If she means body vermin belts I'd indeed be grateful for one now and again. I have one on at present, but it soon gets soiled. I've been digging all morning and am tired now. After 10-30 meal I went up the hill and fetched a pail of water (sounds like the nursery rhyme but I didn't fall down). I got a tin bath and washed myself from head to heel. Now I feel like a new pin with a clean shirt, socks and underclothes. We were all up early this morning. (Censored.) meeting a Mrs. Aird of Moy. She doesn't know me but her daughters do. I have some vivid recollections of leaving them home from a concert in Moy and of getting black looks from Dr. and Mrs. Wright for doing so.

I had a fine long letter from the enemy Eva Kennedy and she sends me her " Punch " each week. In this connection I must tell you of quite a romantic incident. Her first paper was by mistake delivered to a Miss B. of the Scottish Women's Hospital at Salonika. Miss B. promptly took it to our head-quarters and wrote her name on the back of it. Accompanying the paper when it reached me was a letter from a Frenchman explaining the mistake and how Miss B. had brought it along. At the end of the letter was a cordial invitation from Miss B. (not an uncommon colour name I mean) to call and see her when I was next at the base. Who she is I don't know but I'll have a josh first chance. I must run now for my call is due any minute. Fondest love to all.

P.S.—A message has just come in to say we may be expected to move any day. This is disconcerting in the extreme. If we go where I expect, the—(censored)—Let Carroll see my letters as much as possible, and please tell him to write.



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Later.

Our C.O. was away so I couldn't get these letters posted with his initials. Last night he returned bringing with him 8 letters and 3 papers, making a total of 40 since Monday week ! Letters dated 4th and 11th April received. Many thanks. Am scribbling this at 7 o'clock before car inspection and will write more later on.

Emily wants me to give more description of country or incident. Jessie's letter was one of that nature surely, another you will probably receive about this time is a mixture of grouse and description, while for length this isn't bad, is it ? I know our late C.O. had a letter returned from H.q. with a scorcher of a criticism for describi ıg—(censored).

I'll be glad to get any parcels, but none have arrived for me so far. If we go north we may not be able to get as many luxuries At the same time I doubt if many will arrive, and it is hardly worth the trouble. Tell Mrs. Young I've not seen any good-looking native women. They don't come near these villages. Further south in the unscorched area there may be plenty, but up here, No ! If the muse will work and I can get the time I'll try to write a detailed account of our journey from the base here. It may not reach you for an age but if possible I'll do it. All the best.

3rd June, 1917.

This letter was returned by the Censor after having been held until 19th. I couldn't re-post it earlier because our C.O. was away ; now it has to be read by one of our officers here. In future you need only expect the veriest scraps. Eleven postcards and nine letters were returned. I'll store up my news and—well, you'll hear it sometime. Meantime you'll have to take me on trust and heap coals of fire on my head by writing me often. Yesterday I got eight letters, seven papers and Austin's cable. I've written him direct, and doing all I can in the matter. I got a letter from Carroll. It was worth waiting for : if only he'd repeat it !



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(*Uncensored—Received 28th July, through Sister Ward.*)

19th May, 1917.

My Dear Emily,

There is a rumour this morning that Hannay, our Q.M. is going home in a day or two, much earlier than I expected, so I've to hurry this letter up in case he leaves suddenly. I was hoping I might get a long account of our journey from Salonique to Slevica written to send, but I've not had the time, and I fear very little chance of quietness and peace even had the leisure been forthcoming. My fellow tent companions, two in particular, Frank Brown and Selous Hodges, seem to be like Tennyson's brook, particularly Brown, Lennie Brew's exact double. Hannay when he starts purposes having a week or so in Monte Carlo and the same in Paris, so I fear this may be delayed if it isn't lost altogether, for he may have to burn it, if a search be made.

Just at this juncture Geo. Brown has come into my tent bringing a "Weekly Whig" and a letter from Nellie. Her letters seem to arrive with much greater regularity than the Irish ones. I've had two from her now since any arrived from Feddal. No parcel has yet come, but the C.O. has gone to Salonique this morning and may bring something back with him. I continue to be well done for, and though we are told to save and be careful of our food, tobacco, etc., nothing approaching a shortage has come this way. Well, now for some news.

Two weeks ago we left Slevica, and came up here 14 kilometres further up the mountain. We are now camped near the very top of the peak at what is known as point K beside Kilometre 30. Three or four kms. further on in a dip is the village of Iven (pronounced like Eaven). The village is like all the others round about, almost completely destroyed. It was a battle-field a month or two ago, and from all appearances Eaven must have been 'Ell at that time. We had been at Slevica for close on two months, and were sorry to leave our camp there, which had begun to take root, as it were, and be a real home to us. As long as a month before we left the change had been mooted, but our C.O. had declared this run too severe for the cars and too dangerous for the drivers to sustain a regular service, so it was put off. The Medecin Divisionaire, however, came on again, and Capt. R. had a second interview in which the former told him we'd really have to come up. He promised



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that the General in command would procure for us all the n cessary spare parts and even new cars if ours could not hold out, but the men's lives must be saved. There had been many lost through the delay since the mules were so slow and the carts so unsuited to the uneven road that something must be done. We were a British Convoy, and much was expected of us. Capt. R. had no alternative but to say we'd do our best for them, and trusted them to do the same for us. As I said last week, the C.O. spoke to us all last week in the mess tent, and when he had finished, we all felt it was a matter of tightening our belts and going for it. Next morning by 8 o'clock, our tents were unpitched, and we were on our way. We were allowed to take all our belongings, even the wooden petrol cases which we had made into cupboards for our odds and ends. The authorities gave us 12 mule carts for two days, and these took up a great deal of the stuff. On the mountain top wood is very scarce, and we were even allowed to carry the empty tin petrol cases with which our workshop was built. For the first two kilometres the road wends along the valley of the Cerna beside the light railway, which stops at Scotchiver. All over this plain were scattered Algerian and Zouave troops with their baggage and mules and ammunition piled in profusion. You can can readily understand why with all these troops on the go with heavy guns and material the Boche aviators were so persistent in their attentions. There was scarcely a fine morning that they did not appear, heralded by the snap of our anti-aircraft batteries. One of these was posted quiet near us, and we knew to look sharp when it started. It was our signal. They came at all hours of the morning, sometimes in ones and twos for scouting only, but on several occasions as many as 12 or 14 came at once, and then the row began. We had all made dug-outs, and did the rabbit touch as quickly as possible. One morning they caught the French aviation ground and set alight 30,000-40,000 litres of petrol, besides killing some troops. Another day they bombed a Zouave camp quite near us. The noise was terrific, and the very ground shook under us. About 100 yards away one poor chap was wounded badly in the foot on an open space. With wonderful endurance he ran for a dug-out, and had got within ten yards of it when another fell, made mince-meat of a dozen mules, and blew him beyond recognition. That day the shrapnel from the guns fell all round us, and we picked up lots of pieces around the camp. I found one bit not five yards from my dug-out. Another day they came, and one daring aviator swooped down on a large dump of ammunition across the river, and fired it. Fortunately, only one pile



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went off. He rose again and dropped two bombs in the British A.S.C. camp. One hit the road and didn't explode and when in the evening I visited the spot, I found it fenced off in case any one would touch it. The second must have been a monster for it landed right amongst the Ford cars and made scrap iron of about 8 or 10 of them. Out of 130 cars, 59 had to go through the workshop for repairs. I must confess the raids did not worry me to any extent. I can't tell why, but in comparison with the submarines, they were to me fun. You must not imagine there was no retaliation. Our boys went over daily and even at Slevica we were sufficiently close to the lines to watch the Boche shell them with extreme vigour. Several of the German planes were brought down, and then we stood and cheered as he fell like a wounded bird. When only one came on a scouting expedition, I rather enjoyed watching the shells burst round him. I've had men in my car on several occasions who had been wounded that morning by the bombs. Our greatest trial was when they came when we were out in our cars. If we had lying cases we could not take cover but had to drive on, and take our chance. I'm glad to say I've not had the experience so far, though once or twice I missed it narrowly. After two kilometres the road began to rise up the side of the mountains, round impossible turns and hairpin bends, until about half-way, when we stopped and looked back we could scarcely find our bearings. Right below we could see the greater portion of the way we had come, but the river was in a new place. I'm getting several snaps from some of those fortunate enough to have cameras that will be worth more than all my words in giving you an idea of our surroundings. Above us the heavy lorries (camions) looked like little flies crawling along a brown line scored on a background of green with black patches here and there where the rocks jut out.

Next Day.—At this juncture I was called away to take three wounded to Slevica and wasn't home in time to get on with this. After dinner I was carried off to make a fourth at bridge and lost. This morning I've spent darning socks and shortening a pair of khaki drill pants. Both are tedious jobs, but I've learnt considerable from the work. I know now that pins and needles have points, more especially needles, that a thimble is quite useful if one only knew what finger to put it on, that if one wishes to sew straight, it is decidedly an advantage to tack it, and I also know that our Ida would have been a treasure here this morning. The pants are not finished yet, but the secret is known.



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Where was I ?—Oh, yes, on the way up to km. 30 for the first time. Well, we all got safely landed about 10-30 and began to pitch our tents. Hodges and I decided we'd put ours a little way down the slope where the others would not obstruct our view, and there it stands well and truly laid. We were squatting among our spades and shovels having a—I forget the word. . . . ? repast when the Doctor came to me and said, " There are two badly wounded (couché) cases and they must be taken down to Slevica. I want you to go, Clow." So in a few minutes I was under way having my first try at the descent and incidentally inaugurating the service (ahem !) I didn't like the journey one little bit, and kept the machine in hand all the way, shoving the engine out and trying all sorts of dodges to keep clear of the edge and at the same time of the camions, which always like more than their share of the road. I got there safely and Capt. R., who was still at Slevica was not a little surprised when he found they'd packed me off so soon. He kept me there that night with Hannay and Geo. Brown to help to clear up the camp and load the mules in the morning. About 1,000 camions pass up and down the road daily in addition to troops, mule carts, and guns of all descriptions so that driving is made even more difficult. All the way are to be seen German and Bulgarian prisoners keeping the surface in repair, breaking white marble like stones, and filling up the ruts and working with ignorant stubborn mules who will persist in standing right across the path. The greater part of the metal for the work is brought by these mules in a most Noah's Ark way. They have a box slung on each side, and the driver brings them into the valleys and fills the boxes and drives up again, oh so slowly. The prisoners are in charge of black Senegal troops who mount guard over them all day, and bring them to and from their camp. Many of them are fine-looking fellows and they seem well fed and cared for, but I notice that one seldom sees them smile.

We have been here a fortnight now without serious accident, though several of the " conducteurs " (sounds swanky) have had narrow squeaks. Old James led off by being pushed down a slope (which fortunately wasn't dangerous) by a camion, but he was easily dragged out. Hannay and Geo. Brown, I think, were the worst. Hannay had pulled up at a right-angled unbanked corner with a non-stop drop of 50-100 feet to let some lorries pass. His engine stopped and he got out to wind it up. The jerk of his getting out gave the car sufficient impetus to move forward. With remarkable quickness and presence of mind he fairly threw himself across the man who was sitting beside him, and managed to reach the brakes with his hands in



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time to save the whole lot going over. I tell you he had the shakes for a minute or two afterwards. Geo. Brown snapped a back band in his wheel to save going over the edge, and managed to steer her sufficiently far up the opposite bank to stop her. Another ambulance was sent for and took off his patients. There have been minor accidents galore. Scarcely a busy day passes but someone touches a camion more or less. For so far, I've escaped, though I got a fright last week when swerving round a bad corner, but nothing happened. Yesterday I had to stop on a very narrow path because of a refractory mule which would get in the way. When I was at a dead standstill, it backed and backed till its posterior bent my lamp a little, but didn't break it. I only wish it had caught the hot radiator. That would have shifted it without doubt!

No words of mine could describe to you the splendour of the view from my tent. Ridge after ridge rises the one higher than the other until the snow-clad peak blends with the blue sky. By nature it is grand in all its ruggedness, but now it is more interesting still. Far to the right lie the Russian lines whose batteries are seldom quiet. On the second ridge and quite visible with the glasses are to be seen the brown lines of the Bulgars. Towards the base of the first hill and round another peak much higher than ours, are the French trenches with Serbs to right and left of them and the Italians still further to the left. Going to the other side of the road, one can see the whole valley of the Cerna. At present it is beautifully green and with the river winding in and out through it, and the wonderful colourings of the hills behind it, is a glorious sight. At the extreme top of it at a point visible from a portion of the road half way down towards Slevica lies Monastir, which is still being shelled by the enemy. Particularly in the morning early and at night the guns belch forth remorselessly. Three days ago the French and Serbs hammered the Bulgar hill with tremendous violence. Even with the naked eye we could see shell after shell burst along their front raising huge clouds of earth. Capt. R. told us he thought a great number of gas shells were being used, but there was a great deal of shrapnel, too. The bombardment was so rapid it was almost rhythmic as the ticking of a clock. Last week the French, Russians, Serbs —the whole lot indeed—made a joint attack which was only partially successful. The Russians and Serbs got the hill they were after, but the others "failed to hold their objective." To us the result was a great number of wounded, somewhere around 1,000 French that day, the majority of them light. Some 300-400 passed down our way, and we were kept busy well into the night. The



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lightly wounded were sent off in empty camions which were passing down to the base again after delivering their loads of ammunition to the line. The heavily wounded, over 100 of them, were kept for us. Some of the boys made four trips that day; I got off with three. Towards dusk, volunteers were asked for the night work, and my virtue was rewarded in volunteering early by getting away at once, though without any dinner, and reaching Slevica before lighting up time. The return journey up those hills was bad enough in the dark without going down. I had a French captain and lieutenant in my car the first trip. The captain had a shrapnel wound in the thigh, and was able to sit beside me. He was delighted, he said, with the opportunity to speak English and jabbered away all the time. He said he'd much rather go on to Sakulevo with me than change.

One day last week the bombardment was terrific. In the evening the guns kept going unceasingly, and when darkness came were still pounding away. In the valley immediately below the second regiment of Zouaves is camped. At nine o'clock there came floating up to us clear and true the bugle call "lights out." It is a most elaborate call, and with all around calm and peaceful, save for the deep booming of the guns, it sounded weird and uncanny. For some time before, the air had been heavily charged, then suddenly with a deafening crash the thunder broke and the lightning lighted up the sky in vivid blinding flashes. It was so wonderful, so majestic, that the thought would come into my mind again and again—Here were gathered together thousands upon thousands of men of different nations and colours, and with them every device known to man to kill and destroy by fire and sword; then at the very height of their effort, God sends forth His fireworks with a mighty peal compared with which the sound of the guns was veritable tinkling, and their flashes as candle lights beside the brightness of his lightning. It seemed to say so distinctly, "I am still in the heavens, and still Supreme, but My might is not as yours. It does not herald the pain and anguish of maimed and bleeding men, the wrecking of homes, the taking of lives, of death itself in every form, but the soft, welcome rain, so that in the morning there will blow over these hills the balmy gentle breeze, and the grass will take on its deepest green, the flowers will hold up their heads to the light refreshed and renewed, the birds will sing their sweetest purest notes, all nature will *not die* but *live* and men who sow and reap will rejoice, as will the beast, which lives by My bounty."

And so it was in the morning, our ambulances were full.



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Two fine big men were carried out to me, one with his right arm clean off, the second with his left completely gone, and I couldn't take them both because on the rough road the two stumps would touch, so one was given to Brown, and instead I carried a man who had lost his eye, the blood still all over his face. Mitch had a poor soul who had had his leg off high up, and also a man with a shattered back. Oh! you've only to see these men daily and to visit the battle-fields where every square yard almost tells its tale by cartridge, shrapnel and bomb, and where even now after months, are lying around the dead bodies of brave men who did not seek to ask for war. On their faces with eyes gone, and skin shrivelled up is still discernible the look of agony and pain as they cried out in terror until death intervened, and behind that, the tragedy of those who loved them, who watched and waited and hoped on when they read the one word "Missing." I tell you you would forgive my moralisings this quiet Sunday afternoon as I lie behind a big rock looking out over the hills, the valley below me rampant with wild flowers, the bees flitting about from flower to flower, and all nature at peace, if only you could see for yourself. The hardest things I have to bear are the groans and cries from the back of my ambulance. Surely, oh, surely, in such a just and righteous cause those cries and prayers ascending to the throne of a just and righteous God will be consolidated into the very corner stones of the house of liberty which these men are building cemented with their blood.

But really I must stop and tell you of a lovely afternoon I had last week. We weren't busy, so I got away early and went down with Hodges and Jno. Brown (there are three Browns in the company) to roam over the hills and try to reach the Cerna Valley by a short cut. I can't tell where we got astray, but soon we found ourselves in a deep ravine with water running down over solid granite rocks. We slid down, and scrambled on till we got tired and didn't seem to be getting much "furreder." (I'm smoking one of Mitch's best cigars, and it has gone out. I find I've only one wretched stinking French sulphur fusee. Wait a minute——Good, I've got it.) Then below us we saw what looked like a cliff. When we reached it we found it was a lovely little triple waterfall and below a gorgeous pool leading into a granite cave. It was too ripping to miss, and in a few minutes Hogie (pronounced as in hog, good name for him) and I were as nature made us, and revelling in the water. We yelled and screamed like two babies as the fall came tumbling down on our backs. Smilingly Jno. Brown took snaps of us,



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so if he be very kind, you may expect to see more of us later on. We rubbed ourselves dry in the sun and set off home another way, travelling even further up the ravine. I pulled a bunch of wild flowers for Cardew who was ill, and the C.O. As we marched on we came to a loose stoned rectangular house with water gushing out of a hole in its side, and what on earth do you think it was? A *Mill*—the most antediluvian cantraption I've ever seen. The water ran down a stone waterway, and thence into the mill through the *trunk of a tree hollowed*. It played on a wooden wheel which had for its lower bearing the solid rock, and which drove a small pair of stones about 2 ft. 6 in. diameter. A small trickle of badly-cleaned rye came through a hopper, and the result was a dark coloured rye flour or meal. The owners were quite in keeping with the mill. They were Greeks or Serbs, I couldn't tell which, and one of them sat by the door in his native costume sewing a cowhide. He seemed to be about 80 or more. I flatly and absolutely refused to go on until I had got inside that mill, so slipping quietly up, I offered the old geeser an English cigarette. It acted like a charm, and soon we were all three inside the dirty, miserable old place. (This cigar is now nearing its end, and is making me sick. Off it goes.) The second man was evidently a son, and he shook hands with me. I got two snaps taken so you will have one later on. I have since been at the mill again, but the younger man was away and the old fellow asleep amongst his hides. It was a stiff climb home, and when we got half-way up the hill on the other side, lo and behold shells were bursting on the top of the mountain. Right through the offensive the old boys have kept their mill rumbling on despite everything.

A few days ago some of the Zouaves were having bomb practice quite near our tents. In one dug-out a poor chap failed to clear the parapet and the bomb fell back and blew him literally to pieces, wounding two of his pals seriously. One of them was fit to be moved and I got the job of bringing him into Slevica.

In health I am quite well, though the edge is going off my appetite. Mitch and I (touch wood) were saying a few days ago that we were one of the only pairs not to miss an hour since December through ill health. It's a great blessing. Mitch continues to afford me more amusement than any one in the camp. His epithets on Hogie are masterpieces though scarcely for the drawing-room. When the tribe moves off on June the 30th, if we remain, I fancy he, Cardew and I will form an Irish tent if we can get together. There has been very heated



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**Old Serbian Mill.**

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discussion this last week in our tent because I refused to get up *every* morning and bring them their coffee and bread, etc., to bed. Their contention is that I get up in any case, and might as well do it, and my contention is that I don't get up for fun or because I like, and that each of us should take our turn. At present the matter stands that I bring it to them one morning in four, whether they respond or not. I'd bring Mitch's every morning but he won't have it unless I bring the others too, and I won't give in to Hogie or Frank Brown.

Last Sunday the Major of the Zouaves regiment invited us down with our gramophone and the two Browns and I went. He gave us tea, and we entertained 200-300 of the troops for an hour or more. They are a tough lot and excellent in attack, for which they are reserved. Capt. R., our C.O., produced a second and much more beautiful gramophone a few days ago and amongst his records is one which is " par excellence," Frank Mullings in " Lend me your aid." This ' phone is not for general use, but I manage to get that record on very often. Last Sunday night I was sitting writing in my tent alone when I heard in a beautiful clear baritone the words of " Praise God from whom " followed by " Abide with me." I couldn't make out where the sounds came from, and I knew no one in the camp had such a voice. Going out I soon found it was the gramophone. It was a treat and brought me nearer home than I'd been since I left Ireland.

My friends in their letters all complain of the scrappy notes I send, but if they could have seen the look of utter indignation and disgust on my face yesterday, when I found on the mess table eleven postcards and nine letters returned from the base censor, they'd understand. Only one letter, a harmless note to Willie, had been opened. Some of the boys had spoken of air raids, etc., and the whole bunch were returned. One was to Jack, and a five sheet newsy epistle to home. Some of them I've re-addressed and forwarded again, but I don't know how to get the home ones through. The joke is, they'd been posted a fortnight before and had never left yet. I do hope this gets home : it simply must, and you will really have to be content with short notes in the ordinary way. I shall get a chance of sending another such on June 30th per some of the boys, if I'm not sent home myself at that time. Harry Eastwood is returning and speaks of going to Ireland with his fiancée. I'll give him a letter of introduction to you. He's a young, impulsive, flippant youth with many faults and a few good points, but give him a welcome for my sake, for after all perhaps his good points outweigh his failings, and he's young.



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We are called No. 1 Alpine Section and, as I said, are about the nearest ambulance camp to the lines. There was some little talk of a few of us being asked to volunteer for work up the hill opposite which is periodically shelled. Cardew says he'll go, and if he does I expect Mitch will, and where they go I go too. I don't think it will come off, though. It is more likely we'll be shifted again soon to Florina or Monastir, though I hope not for some time yet. It is so much cooler and healthier up in the hills.

We've got a football and knock it about on the road, and the little patch of ground where the camp is pitched. The man who kicks it too hard has got to go for it, and that means a walk of a kilometre sometimes! I wonder how Jack is? I do hope he gets to Aldershot for a time. It would make things so much happier for Annie and the bairns: indeed, for all of us. I was amused at Kenneth's first remark, "What comes after Major?" He's the right stuff, if that's his view. I've got a pith helmet and khaki ducks for the warm weather. The trousers are now finished, but are a little too long still; however, that can't be helped and I can't be bothered ripping them again. When all my letters were returned yesterday Mitch said he was very sorry, but he knew a cure for avoiding trouble with the Censor. He had adopted it ever since he came out, and that was not to write any letters at all.

I understand Uncle Mills left Salonika on May 8th, so if he hasn't lost it, his letter should be with you now. I shall be anxious to know if it has reached you. I'll keep this open in case I've more to add before Hannay goes: indeed, he may not get away for weeks.

The guns are tearing away again, and the hill opposite is having a solid dressing down. One big shell has just caught the top of it, and the dust is still in the air.



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3rd June.

It's just a fortnight since I wrote the enclosed, and there is no sign of Hannay going yet, so I'm trying to send this away by one of the Scottish Women Nurses, who is supposed to leave on 14th from Salonique or the 5th from Scotchiver. I may not manage it, but I'll try.

I've had quite a number of letters since I wrote, Nellie as usual heading the list. I had two from her to-day. For so far not a single parcel has arrived, and I'm almost inclined to tell you to discontinue. The long delay in my last letter which was held over for a fortnight and then returned to me is aggravating, for it may still leave in your minds the impression that I'm going home on June 30th, whereas I'm not. I've decided to stay on for a little longer and be guided by how matters move here. After June 30th we will only be 11 drivers, and six new cars on the way. This will bring our cars up to 20 so they will have to provide us with more men. There is a rumour that they will be A.S.C. military men, not volunteers. In that case we'd be a mixed convoy, and in consequence I think unsatisfactory; indeed, they might push us all home, and I fancy Capt. R. may want to move too. If we do go, I can get a job with the C.R.F. in France. My sheet is clean here, and Capt. R. will see to that. I discovered heaps of things I'd forgotten to tell you. The name of the town Cardew and I visited and at which I spent such a glorious day was Vodena (new name) the old capital of Macedonia. It was en fete for Easter, their Easter lamb for the sacrifices were much in evidence. It is as I said a most interesting old dilapidated city, most gloriously situated on a plateau half way down two hills with the most wonderful valley below right down to Vertekop. We arrived a few hours too late to witness the public execution of three brigands in the so-called square of the town. They were marched up and shot before the crowd for carrying arms. A crier was going round the town publicly demanding all arms on penalty of death, a nice mild procedure.

I also wanted to tell you more of our old O.C. He was simply impossible and was getting into trouble with everybody in the Convoy and out of it; indeed, I fancy the authorities had a hand in his going. You will I know be immensely surprised and amused when I tell you that he took me and Alan Mitchell aside and asked us our opinions as to what he should do. Our tent was near his, and we overheard a prodigious row the night before between him and Capts. H. and R. I for one knew then it was



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a question of his going or the other two. Next morning he got Mitch and me behind my car and gave us an awkward ten minutes. First he asked us if we had heard Bartlett and Eastwood at any time being impertinent to Capt. H., and I had to admit, because both the boys and Capt. H. had been my friends, that I had heard them on several occasions say most unnecessary and decidedly impertinent things to Capt. H., but " of course," I said, " they are both very young, and lack tact," etc., and excused them on those grounds. The next sentence was a stunner. He simply said, " Would you two boys be happier if I left ? " It was most unfair, because if we had said " yes " and he didn't go, we were in the soup. If we said " no " we were liars, and condemning ourselves to misery. To make matters worse Mitch never spoke, and left me to do the talking. The answer he wanted, of course, was " we want you to stay," so I didn't let him have it, but instead told him there were times when he was almost impossible, and that I regretted he had not the confidence of the men. All this in guarded language and also admitting his difficulties of dealing with 25 men who considered themselves volunteers and gentlemen, and each of whom wanted the convoy run on his own plan. He said he'd never been cross with me or Mitch, as we kept our cars on the road, etc., etc., but I pointed out that on several occasions he had blamed me in the wrong, when I had afterwards proved I was right. There the matter ended, but I found out from Capt. R. later on that *he* had sent the C.O. to us as being the two " most sensible men in the convoy." The two Browns had their knife in him for a long time because he called them " pilfering swine," and two more honest boys don't exist, especially George. Major C. said he'd address us in the mess tent the night before he left, and apologise to the Browns, but he funked it, and instead said good-bye to each of us in our tents and slipped away in the morning before we were up. Topham his chauffeur, danced the Highland fling when he saw his motor disappear. His excuse when he got to Salonique was that we were the finest lot of men he'd ever licked into shape, and now he felt it quite safe to leave us in charge of his adjutant.

This entire front seems to be uneasy and the latest is that an expeditionary force is being formed to march towards Athens, and if you please we are second on the list to go with it. Immediately it was mooted, Capt. R. was off like a shot to get us the job, but the American Convoy was in first. We have more influence, but they have more cars, are young men, and have been tried and burnt too in the fires of Monastir, and I fancy its



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theirs. Robertson says it's a job for the toughs. He's away again about it, and should be home to-morrow or Tuesday. I wouldn't funk it a bit, but have a slight apprehension that for a number of us it would be heavy, especially in the terrific heat. Here we are cool, and as the road is gradually losing its terrors with usage, we are very happy. The work lately has been easy as regards quantity and the Medicin Divisionaire is very pleased with us and says we are indispensable. With these conflicting reports it's hard to know what will happen, but I know I am perfectly confident that whatever happens will be for the best. · As far as I am concerned, since the C.O. left, things have been as different for me as day from night. Alan Mitchell, Cardew, the two Browns, Hodges and I are Robertson's props, and he knows that too, with the result that there is come and go to an unusual extent. I was greatly annoyed last week when a general meeting was held complaining of food problems. I fear I was indiscreet in letting the boys know I was a dissenter and was blamed for it, too. The meeting lasted two hours, and some of these youngsters were impertinent to the C.O. far beyond the limit. You see they know he is powerless to punish them except by sending them home, and they are going in any case, so they don't care. There are more ways of killing a dog than by hanging him though, and they'll know it later on. If they were only fed like trench tommies they'd have a different tale to tell, and their want of tact and respect to their elders is appalling in the extreme. One man said his accidents on the hill were due to improper and insufficient food. My appetite has largely subsided ; perhaps if it hadn't, I'd grouse too.

Last Thursday was a veritable pic-nic for me. I was not on the list to go out, and got my other work finished by 10 o'clock, so Capt. R. allowed me to go with Cardew to Sakulevo. You see we used to carry from Slevica to Sakulevo, and now our run is from Km.30 to Slevica, so I was glad to see the old hospital again. It was a glorious sunny day, and we slid down the hill here like a shot in Cardew's lighter car. He's a ripping driver, and fears nothing. Once or twice I had to shut my eyes till we got round a corner. I lay back, and felt myself at last a General, free for the day. We filled up six crates petrol and on the way back to Slevica I boldly walked up to the Serbian Relief and asked for Miss Davis. I struck the Commandant's tent and he looked at me as much as to say " How dare you come to speak to one of my girls." Miss D. was out, but I said I'd call back. We got back to Slevica, dumped our cases there, had a cup of coffee with the Frenchman with whom we are both friends, and



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then off again to Sakulevo for another cargo. This time Miss D. was in, but I had to face the lady chief as well as the Commandant. We had an hour there, and behaved ourselves so well, that Mr. Grey, the C.O. (an Irish man from Cork, who I fear has Sinn Fein tendencies) thawed completely and would insist on our coming back every opportunity we had. Miss Davis trotted another friend into the tent who comes from Melbourne, so I was doubly at home. They came out and saw us off. Arrived at Slevica we discharged three cases, and were about to start up the hill with the balance when our own C.O. hove in sight in the staff car. He said we were very early, and was such a good sport as to sit down and write a letter to a great friend of his, Miss Richardson (sister of Lady Constance Richardson) at the Scottish Women's and packed us off with it. We delivered the letter O.K., and Scott the engineer trotted along the lady driver I wanted to know, and Cardew met a friend whom he knew in France. We had tea with them there, and got home before dark

After dinner I played bridge, and was coming down to my tent when I found seven of our crowd, Mitch, Cardew & Co'. sitting out on the rocks, with a flaring acetylene lamp and a Primus stove on a box having an open-air supper. What a feed ! They had their morning's ration of bacon, a tin of herrings, a tin of tunny fish, a large tin of peaches, bread, butter, wine, and their rum ration. Can you imagine the scene on the top of the Serbian mountains with the trenches in full view though at a safe distance : the chaff, the laughter, a most uproarious scene, because it was Martin's birthday. I left early at 11 o'clock, Hogie at 12-30, and the others later. On Friday we had a most terrific thunderstorm. It lasted 45 minutes and nearly washed us out. I was in one tent, and the channel was unfit to stand the strain, with the result that the floor was washed away about nine inches deep. Hail fell as large as beans. Mitch was a sight. He got his tin hat on and his mac, and ran about all over the place with a pick and shovel clearing drains, etc. When all was quiet, I stood and laughed at him till I was tired. His trousers were soaked ; his socks down over his boots, and his underclothes soaking wet and torn, and a smile on his funny little face like Quaker Oats' Jim. As a parting shot, he lifted a 7 lb. hammer and smashed an empty petrol box to smithereens, then started to snowball everybody with hail-stones. To-night is it raining cats and dogs, though at mid-day it was swelteringly hot.

Cardew and I were the cynosure of all eyes yesterday. Capt. Henderson came to me about 11 o'clock and told me two of



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the Scottish women were coming up for lunch in Cardew's car, and he thought they'd like to go a walk after lunch with two of our younger men instead of him and the Doctor. " You know, Clow, we want to send two of the boys who will do the convoy credit, so who would you like to take with you ? " I thanked him and said Cardew or Mitch, so as Mitch was on duty, Cardew came. One turned out to be the assistant matron, so I engineered her for Cardew, and I took a little Newcastle lass myself. We walked down to the old mill, and nearly died from heat and exhaustion on the way back. At the mill we found about a dozen very picturesque Macedonian men and women who received us as princes, touched their breasts and shook hands with us and gave us a sort of cheese made from goats' milk. Climbing up the hill, Nurse Ward almost trod on a snake, and I came on a dead Bulgar half buried. Capt. Henderson had tea for us when we got back and then Cardew tore us down the hill in the char-a-banc. The Matron has asked us down to-morrow for tea, but I doubt if we can work it. We daren't take a car for joy-riding, and though we could get a seat on a camion going down, we might get stuck coming up and have to walk it. The nurse is going home and volunteers to post this letter, and as she leaves on Tuesday, I'm dead keen on getting this down. I was cute enough to tell Hendy that she'd take one for him too, and he's caught on. Her bosom pal is the chauffeur I like, so I'll have to be very diplomatic. We had an hour's trotting around last night after leaving the matron down. It would be amusing if our C. O. on the way home from Salonique should drop off and find us there. It's a sort of " reserved for officers," but some of the " conducteurs " might give them points if they got the chance.

To-day I had two letters from Nellie and one from Ida, with four papers also. Many thanks. I assure you they were most acceptable. I fear I shall have to close. If Nurse Ward doesn't take this on June 14th, the padre who leaves on June 30th will bring it. I shall be most horribly annoyed if it goes astray. Hogie is in bed. Frank Brown, Cardew and Mitch are chatting away and trying to keep me from writing coherently.

If Emily ever complains about the length of my letters again, I'll let her see my revolver. Don't expect any news worth while in my ordinary letters. Every word I write has to be read by Hendy or C. O., so I'll be very brief. I'll be able to let you have another on June 30th, and will tell you if we move. I find Capt. R. is a swank. His people entertained the late King in Scotland. I also find one of our Conducteurs, a



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rather eccentric man Mr. Sotherby, who we all thought at first was a taxi-driver, is quite a toff. His brother keeps the Privy purse, and another brother is a judge, or something like that. Our Mr. S. makes the porridge every morning.

Good-bye for the present, I'm off to bed.

Fondest love to all.



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6th June, 1917.

My Dear Father,

I have to acknowledge several letters from home since last I wrote, all of which were of the greatest interest. For so far no parcels have put in an appearance. I am quite well, and not overworked by any means, treated also with kindness and consideration by those in authority as well as by my pals. We have been having a series of heavy thunderstorms, but otherwise the weather is perfect though gradually getting warmer. I hope "Jessie" will write you soon again, and also I trust by this time or near it, No. 9 will reach you. I think it is an excellent idea putting the numbers on the letters, for then you know exactly their sequence. It is a matter of great thankfulness (that's not the right word, but you'll understand) that I have not had to be off work for an hour since I went to London on December 8th. I have indeed been most fortunate, and can only hope and pray that such a state of things will continue till the end. Our high altitude is most helpful, and I fancy we will be allowed to remain here for some time longer. The remainder of this letter will be devoted to James Austin.

When I received the cable, I wrote Mr. Austin at once a short note. Capt. Robertson, my C.O., when I showed him the cable, got me to write a letter as from him to Col. Purves Stewart, his friend and chief over all the hospitals out here asking for a report on James's condition. The colonel was away, so my letter did not reach him, but on returning to the camp last Thursday, I was delighted to learn that the Colonel was in Capt. R.'s tent spending the night with him. I was called up and asked to write out an enquiry stating exactly what I wanted to know. I enclose you a rough copy of what I wrote. Capt. R. went to the base two days later, and came home last night. He called me in, and I find that both he and Col. Stewart have been more than kind. Capt. R. went specially out to the hospital to see James, but as he was dozing they didn't wake him up. Col. Stewart also went out and had a consultation with the doctors in charge. He has given strict instructions to all concerned that his case is to be their constant care. He has also recommended additional treatment and nothing humanly possible is being left undone to pull James through. I need not attempt to cloak the fact that the authorities described his case truthfully when they said he was seriously wounded. His chief trouble is his thigh, and a lateral wound higher up. There is also a slight malarial tendency. Whilst serious, the case is



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not without hope, and Mr. and Mrs. Austin may rest perfectly assured that no chances are being taken. You will therefore see that there is nothing left for us all to do, but hope and pray that the means used for his recovery may be successful. Capt. R. tried to get a cable through to you on my behalf and I hope it will reach you safely. Further, I am getting leave on Saturday or Sunday and am going down to see James. Capt. R. has made arrangements for my permit, and the Colonel for my entrance to the hospital. I shall write from there to Mr. Austin direct as soon as I have personally seen James, and I do hope I shall have good news for him. You know how much I respect Mr. and Mrs. Austin, and if there remains anything I can do when I get on the spot, it will be done. It would be the greatest joy possible to see him on his feet again.

Every best wish, and love to all.



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(To Mr. Austin.)

14th June, 1917.

MY DEAR MR. AUSTIN,

I have got safely back again to my mountain camp after my visit to the base. I was there two full days and was allowed to see James each day. My father will no doubt have told you of the kindness of Col. Stewart and my C.O. on his behalf. I found that the cable which we tried to get off from here had gone astray, so I immediately saw the base censor, and cabled you as follows per my father, as his address was shorter :— "Saw Austin. Everything possible being done. Keep hoping. Malcolm."

He knew me at once and asked after my welfare. He says they are very good to him, and he is looking forward to being sent home. The medical officer confirmed Col. Stewart's visit, and the interest every one was taking to get James round the corner. The sister in charge is a most capable little woman called Davage, and she told me she thought she saw some improvement from the previous week.

I had some business to transact with the British R. Cross authorities for my C.O., and one of the principal ladies there, a Miss Beauchamp, offered to keep in touch with the ward and report developments to me at once. She also promised to get another cable away in a few days. I was only able to stay with James a very short time on each occasion. He seemed to be particularly glad I was cabling. He had a paper by his side, and was reading a little at intervals.

As I said to my father, I need not attempt to alter the report that James is seriously wounded, but not by any means without hope. I think he has gained since he entered the hospital, and both the Sister and Medical Officer gave me considerable confidence to cable you as I did. Several cases were pointed out to me where men had been even more seriously wounded, and were now almost well again. He promised me faithfully to fight his way back to health again with all his will, and I feel he will do so. He is not disfigured at all, and as far as I know and could see, will just be himself again. If I get the slightest opportunity, I shall try and see him again, and will certainly write as soon as I have any further news. I only wish it was in my power to do more for him, but that is beyond you or me. We can only hope and pray and hope, and I join with you in that with all my soul. I know just what he means to you every one, and



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how much you would like to have him with you. Rest assured, however, that there are kind hearts out here watching over him constantly and doing everything humanly possible to send him back to you. If you can think of anything I can do, don't ask; just command.

With every best wish to Mrs. Austin and the bairns, not forgetting your own self.



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*(Uncensored. Received 26th July, through Harry Eastwood, a returning member of the Convoy.)*

19th June, 1918.

My Dear Folk,

We live on rumours here, and there is one afoot to-night that some of our 30th June crowd may be leaving for Salonique any day, and if so this must be ready to go with them for I want to take every opportunity of sending you a letter without the scrutiny of our Doctor here who is now censoring letters and also of the Base Censor.

I almost forget where I left off last in the letter which Miss Ward was to take for me. At the last minute I decided she'd better not post the letter to you direct on account of the danger of her correspondence being watched, so I asked her to deliver it by hand to Jessie Horne who would post it in another envelope to you. You must get that lengthy newsy epistle at all costs!

I have to acknowledge letters from you all, though only by one mail shortly after I wrote. Since then neither papers nor letters, bar one from Willie, have come my way. I'm blaming it on the Censor, who, you will remember, held up my long letter of 4th May for nearly three weeks. In it I told you of our old C.O.'s departure, which decided me to stay on here. You will likely have ruled by Uncle Mills' letter which contained the news that we were returning *en masse*. As matters now stand I, with about 10 others, have signified our intention to remain till 30th September with the option of signing on again for a further period after that.

In my last I mentioned a possibility of our going to Athens or in that direction. As far as I can hear we are not going. I overheard the C.O. tell the Doctor to-day that we were not likely to be moved from here presently, and this is satisfactory from a climatic point of view. We are now getting well through June and have not had a really oppressive day yet. If we can get July and August here we shall be lucky. Fighting, beyond desultory firing, has been absent for the past few days, and our patients are mostly " malades " (sick) as distinct from " blessés " (wounded). Our own camp has not escaped. The dear Padre, Sotheby and little Mitch are laid up with dysentery. Sotheby was worst and had to be taken to Scottish Women's Hospital. The Padre is round the corner and Mitch, I think, is over the



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worst, though indeed he is far from well : he is lying beside me at present very weary and tired. Cardew had it, too, but is quite himself again. Four or five others in the camp are laid up with slight malarial attacks and colic. One day last week I had a wretched bilious attack through eating (I think) a piece of mouldy bread. It came on in the evening and I thought my head would open. Is there any polite word for vomiting ? I did a lot of that and by morning had had a few hours' sleep and kept up my record of not being off work. I had a wretched head, though, and was glad when the run was over. The Doctor was very kind and soon had me on my feet again. I had a little scare yesterday morning, too, when ominous rumblings sent me flying for my flannel bandage, a strip about five to six yards long which the French issue as a protection against chills and dysentery. I hadn't worn mine up to then, but I have it on now and will keep it on too. To-day I feel a lot better and to-morrow will be O.K. again.

My principal item of news since I wrote is my trip to Salonique. Captain R. came home from the base about a fortnight ago and sent for me. He read me Col. Stewart's report on James Austin and told me he'd been to see him but wasn't admitted as James was asleep or having his wounds dressed, at least he hadn't the opportunity of talking to him. I have written Papa *re* James and since my return have also written Mr. Austin. James is very ill. He has a compound fracture of the thigh, a wound (I think) on the side, his arm is bandaged, and he has symptoms of malaria and jaundice. I crept quietly into the ward with the C.O. of the whole place, and had he not said " How are you, Austin ? " I'd have had to examine every man before I'd have recognised the boy. Before I went in the officer told me he wouldn't know me, but he did, and was quite coherent though his speech was bad. He apologised for it. I only stayed a few minutes but promised to call next day. I did so, and he knew me at once. He said he thought they were all going to be sent home by hospital ship, but I fear James would not be fit to travel. He was very glad to know I was cabling, which I did at once. The first cable which Capt. R. tried to get off from here never reached Salonique as far as I could trace. The sister in charge and the doctors say they will not give up hope whilst he breathes. He has been over a month now and is no worse than when they brought him in ; in fact, the sister says she thinks he is making slight progress. I don't know when I looked on a sight that pained me more or went more to my heart. I won't say any



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more, and of course Mr. Austin must not be told. I don't know why, but I feel it in my bones that James will get well; it will be long and slow, but I want to live to see the day when he and his people will be united again. If he got sufficiently well to be sent home, the sight of his mother and father would be the greatest tonic he could have. I can assure you that he is being cared for in every possible way. Between officers and men there are well over 1,000 here, and James Austin is the man they want to put on his feet. I had business at the British Red Cross and the lady chief there is a Miss Beauchamp. In the course of conversation I told her why I was at the base and she without being asked or without the least hesitation offered to go at intervals to see him and keep me advised. Since then I got the enclosed letter which speaks for itself. I was surprised at Miss Beauchamp's kindness for I had never seen her before. I shall keep writing Mr. Austin whenever I can get any news, and it is quite possible I may see James again soon.

The actual trip down was most enjoyable. Turney (the young 18-year-old mechanic) and Capt. Henderson composed the party. Capt. H. was on his way home to England, another victim of the ignorance and tactlessness of the boys here. Capt. R. and the Doctor now remain the sole remnant of the original C.O. and section leaders. Capt. H. was a gentleman of means. He had his faults, like all of us; his temper was quick and he was not a leader of men, but at the same time he was badly and hardly treated. I am pleased to say I never had a cross word with the man, and was one of the very few to whom he said goodbye. The journey was quite uneventful. We slid along at a ripping pace, for slow driving is an absolutely impossible virtue with Charles Turney. I was laden with errands for the C.O. and the boys too, and my time was more than fully occupied shopping and running around offices galore. The second day Turney was out with Hendy and broke his front spring. We went to B.P.C.S. and by cereful work coaxed a spare out of the chief there.

I called at the Scottish Women's Hospital and saw Miss Brown. She is very kind indeed and very Irish. While I was talking to her beside the car who should come along tearing in a big Army Sunbeam but Miss Warren, the Australian girl from the Serbian relief at Sakulevo. The surprise was mutual and Miss B. simply smiled and said, " I think you know more people here than you let on." The upshot of it was Turney drove back to town alone and I swanked in the Sunbeam and found Miss W. was on her way home to England, worse luck. We had lunch



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next day together, and dinner the following night, constituting by far the most enjoyable social functions since I left London, especially the dinner, which we had sitting on the balcony of the White Tower Cafe right alongside the sea. Miss W. isn't a beauty but a real good sensible Australian. When I left her back to the Hotel she would insist on lading me with cigarettes. She had too many and I came off with 200 ripping Turkish from John Duncan of Glasgow. I'm puffing rings in her honour daily now, and saving them (the cigarettes I mean) like gold dust, the quality is so special.

Next morning, Turney and I were up at 4-15 a.m. and put two extra leaves in his front spring. The car which Hendy drove over the cliff had been converted into a dainty little camionette and it was my duty to drive her home. The two cars were heavily laden, but we sped merrily along smothered in dust without any accident until we reached the foot of a big hill at Vodena, some 85 kilos. from Salonique. Turney was leading, and some pack ponies crossed his path causing him to pull up suddenly on the steepest part of the hill. In trying to start again he completely speared a back wheel at the hub. The car of course became out of control, and had he not had the presence of mind to steer her in her backward flight for the high bank he'd have gone over the edge sure as fate. While we were examining the damage a huge French camion hove in sight and we persuaded the driver to tow us into Vodena, which he did very kindly. Here was a pretty kettle of fish, for our spare wheels were useless and the broken one beyond repair. While we were working to get the smashed one off two nurses came along and I hailed them at once, even though I had my coat off and sleeves rolled up. They very considerately came with me and showed me through devious side streets the way to the depot of the wounded allies, where I found an American doctor. He had one Ford but regretted he hadn't the spare part required. He lent me his Serbian orderly to conduct us to some Serbian place where we (the sisters, he and I) found a British Tommy in charge of two Fords belonging to a Serb Colonel. Here the sisters bade me farewell, and in parting I told the pretty one, a Miss Jackson, that if perforce I had to remain in Vodena overnight whilst Turney drove home for a spare, I'd certainly jump on a camion and go back to Vertekop to help her spend the rest of her monthly holiday. My colossal cheek was unexpectedly rewarded with a very gracious smile and " Oh, do, and now I hope you won't get a wheel ! " But I did, after tramping round those wonderful old narrow streets centuries old, up stair-



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cases, through weird-looking houses, to ask permission of the Colonel. He was asleep, and his orderly wouldn't wake him. In the end we got the wheel through bribery and corruption, and by 3-30 were speeding on our way again on a non-stop run to the Scottish Women's camp at Scotchiver, where we discharged a part of our cargo before starting up the mountain. Sister Harvey, the assistant matron, one of the best and kindest of middle-aged women, took us in and regaled us with cherries, wine and biscuits, and sent us on our way rejoicing. By 9-30 we whizzed into camp, to be immediately surrounded by the boys demanding letters, parcels, and their various purchases. The C.O. was away, but my account of the journey given on the following morning seemed to please him quite. Wasn't I just pleased to have brought the camionette up without a cough! She's a daisy, and I wish she were mine to drive. Didn't I just fall into my little cot after 18 hours solid, to awake to a day of orderly duty—on my birthday, which passed very quietly without undue hilarity.

Mitch is, I think, a trifle better to-day. He's actually writing a letter, about the fourth since he left home! A few days ago at dinner I was leaving the tent and found him having his meal seated on a box, opposite him a copy of the "Tatler" open at the picture of a beautiful young countess with whom he said he was dining, but added "She's an ignorant prig, she hasn't spoken a word to me yet!"

Two days ago the C.O. sent for me to drive him some 50 kilos to Banitza. It ended in his driving me there and I him home. (That sentence looks peculiar, but it's correct.) On the way back he made some errand which brought us to the S.W.'s camp. Here he saw his favourite Miss Stewart Richardson and the Hon. Miss Corbett, daughter of some Scotch earl. Oh! we're some style out here! I minded the car until my little short-haired Scotch chauffeur came in, and then played up to my C.O. I fancy *our* visits there are not pleasing to Capt. R. and in some ways I can well understand why, though there are a few of us whose word might be taken as our bond to behave as the gentlemen we profess to be.

This is a glorious warm summer day. Fritz had us up shortly after five, but I lay and damned him and his 'planes and burying my head in the pillows told Frank Brown to shout if he came overhead. He, or rather they, dropped a bomb or two out west. A few days ago the anti-aircraft guns were spouting shrapnel almost overhead. An exploded shell fell a few yards down from



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our tent ; I promptly dug it up and cut the copper band off for a serviette ring. They have not been over aggressive of late, mostly coming over for scouting work.

There are a number of men coming out from home to take the place of those departing. I can't say when they will arrive, but it is quite possible I may be one of the persons sent to the base to bring them and some extra cars up, though I feel sure the C.O. himself will go. I am hoping against hope that I shall be sent, then I could see James again. Did I say in my last letter that our convoy is called No. 1 Alpine Section, though that must not appear in letters. Some of the boys spread a report a little while ago that the enemy were sending shells over the French hills to Kilometre 32. I don't quite fathom it, we are at Kilometre 30, and if so we are only 1¼ miles off.

To be very Irish, this is to-morrow—I mean I began this letter last night but the major portion of it has been written to-day, which is 20th June. I'm feeling quite O.K. again, and hope to keep so. I wonder often what Nellie is doing and will send her a line before the boys go. I have been anxious, too, about Jack, and hope to hear soon that he has been sent to Aldershot out of harm's way and in the way of further promotion.

As in the beginning, so now, there is a great deal of growling going on among some of the men here. Personally when I begin to think earnestly and count up my blessings they are far in excess of my grievances. In comparison with millions the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places. The risks as days go by seem of smaller and smaller account. I miss many, very many, of the luxuries of home, but I have enough and to spare. We are all so prone to put our own selves before the part (and it isn't a big one) we are playing in stemming the tide of human suffering that never seems to ebb. When I see these poor Serbs and Macedonians waiting daily for their small portion of bread and soup, carrying it away to the ruins of their homes, I feel ashamed of many around us squabbling and crying out for what they call their rights, in the form of luxuries for their stomach, which even old Mother England is casting aside. But while in the main we are happy we never cease to talk of home. Day and daily we conjure up what we shall do when that great day of peace dawns ; the hours we shall laze in the mornings between sheets of snowy white ; the feeds we shall have surrounded by those we hold dearest and love most, who make up life to us ; the visits we shall pay to our old haunts to renew our acquaint-



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ance there. Our brains reel with the thought of it all, but—much water will pass under bridges before then, and there is much to do in the meantime, work which will daily bring us near to suffering and self-sacrifice, and teach us perhaps some lessons in unselfishness and bring us nearer to finding our souls.

Of the war situation I can tell you nothing; you know far more than I do of Tino's removal and the pressure of our troops in Thessaly and Athens (I think). The British are supposed to have taken hold of the corn crop in Thessaly. On the whole there is renewed courage out here and the hope of brighter——

*(Here the letter abruptly stops.)*



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*(Received 27th July, addressed to Willie.)*

July 8th, 1917.

DEAR MR. CLOW,

Your letter to your brother Malcolm arrived here this morning, and I opened it to find your address. I am sorry to inform you that your brother is down with dysentery and seriously ill. By this I do not mean you to think that there is no hope of his getting better because from the Doctor's report yesterday I have every hope. I evacuated him to a British Base Hospital some 70 kilometres away under the personal care and supervision of a friend of mine, and there he will receive every possible care and attention. I am glad now that I did so, otherwise there would have been no hope of his recovery. I saw him yesterday and although very weak he is recovering. If only he fights well now the game is won.

I am sorry he should have been laid up, particularly so since he was one of my best men, always keen and trustworthy.

Will you convey my sympathy to your father and mother and tell them not to worry, everything that I can do has been done; I shall spare neither time nor trouble to get him on his legs again, after that he will come home. Doubtless you have heard that his friend Austin died. Poor chap, he had his share of wounds but he bore it like a man and died making others feel proud of his example. I got one of the most skilled medical men here to interest himself in Austin but all of no avail.

I shall write you immediately on having further news of Malcolm. I am also in the throes of the same trouble, so please excuse this note. Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

A. STRUAN ROBERTSON,
Capt. and O.C.



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*(Received 3rd August. Written in a very shaky hand and addressed to his Father.)*

23-30th June, 1917.

DEAREST OF ALL,

I was interrupted in my last letter to you and had to let it go just as it was. Now I fear I'm only able to send you a short line to say I'm in hospital ill with dysentery. I escaped but a short time later than I was rejoicing in the fact of not having had an illness. I wonder will our C.O. let you know or the hospital people either. I've been a week now. They say I'm doing as well as could be expected, but I don't know how long they will keep me yet. You can read between the lines all the love in my being for you ALL and I want your sympathy and help to pull me over this time. What is there to think about as the hours tick off on leaden wheels but those at home. I may see Capt. R. soon and will perhaps get him to cable you. I'm rather weak and can't run about. They are trying to feed me up a bit these few days, but I find it difficult. The staff are very good to me, being English. The weather is warm and the flies troublesome.

Fondest love to all.

From,

MALCOLM.



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*(Received 8th August.)*

July 11th, 1917.

DEAR MR. CLOW,

It is with the deepest regret I have to inform you that your son Malcolm died last night after a short illness, suffering from clinical dysentery. Everything was done for him but he passed peacefully away at half-past five last night. I motored through to see him and had only left some 25 minutes when he died. His condition then was hopeless and he was only just able to shake hands and say "farewell." He has died in the great cause, and I who write you know something about the price which apparently must be paid, and it is good to think that his work, always willingly and cheerfully done, was that of helping those who were struck down and possibly passing out.

He was a fine lad, trustworthy and very straight, and I miss him very much. He was one of the few men here who could be depended upon at all times, and his good work will certainly be rewarded.

Some day when there is not quite so much to do I shall write you a summary of his work and if possible will send you a photograph of his grave, should you wish it.

He will be buried to-day at Sorovitch with full honours, and I ask you to accept the sympathy of all of his fellow-men here, and to you who mourn his loss at home remember that "he laid down his life for his friends."

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

A STRUAN ROBERTSON,
Capt. and O.C.



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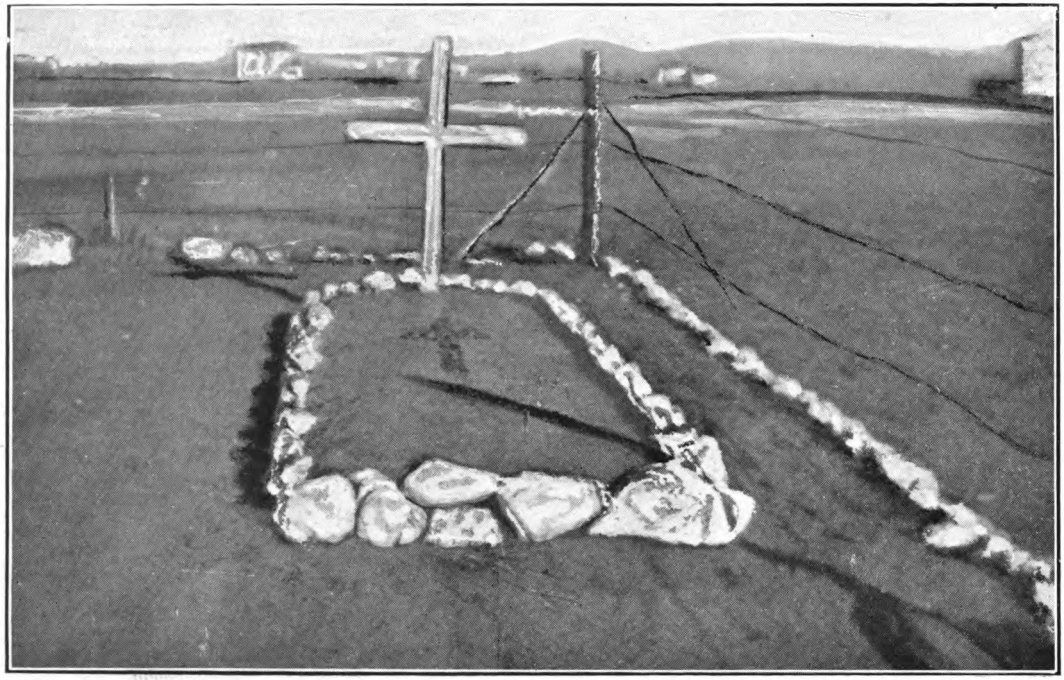

**At Sorovitch.**

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## FOR REMEMBRANCE.

———o———

Amid the swelling sorrows of the years
Old thoughts come swinging back, how long ago
He sang to us of the Ionian sea
And the Sicilian Isles. Little we thought
That through those sunlit waters he would pass,
And not return again, the lad we loved.

In a far land he lies, where, led by love,
He gave his life for men to him unknown,
Save that they sent a piteous cry for aid
Across the sea, as did the man of old
Whom Paul in heaven-sent vision once beheld
Standing with outstretched hands upon the shore
And crying—"Come thou into Macedon,
And help us."

He too saw his duty clear,
For he was given a vision of the weak,
The wounded and the dying, and his heart
Claimed them as brothers, though of alien blood:
Brothers who fought for the same righteous cause.

With cheerful spirit he endured the toil
And deadly weariness of the long day,
Tending with kindly word and gentle hand,
Men shattered in the cruel rack of war:
Bringing calm thoughts with the dear gift of song
In low sweet tones that only spoke of peace.
Then God said, "Well-beloved, thou hast borne
Thy share of Christ's own burden. Come thou up
And enter into rest."

Lo! from his grave
A message rings like angel-call from heaven—
"Only in suffering shall ye find your souls.
Love, Courage, Hope: these are a triple cord
That binds us to our duty and to God."

Great was his love. May such love fill our hearts,
Our courage match with his, when the fierce waves
Of life's sea o'erwhelm: and when, for us
Dark Azrael opes the gate, may we
Have his abiding hope.
So those he loved,
And those who loved him, though tears dim their eyes,
Look on God's face, and know that all is well.

JAS. A. WIGHTMAN.

Sept., 1917

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